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ABSTRACT

The General Accounting Office reviewed sexual harassment of students at the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland; the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado; and the Military Academy in West Point, New York. At the core of the review were surveys of academy students, faculty, and staff conducted in late 1990 and early 1991 and focus groups of academy students. Results of more recent studies conducted by the academy were also reviewed to determine if results were still valid. Findings indicated between one-half to three-quarters of academy women experienced various forms of harassment at least twice a month; the vast majority of men reported never having experienced sexual harassment. The harassment women experienced usually took the following forms: derogatory personal comments; comments that standards had been lowered for women; comments that women did not belong at the academy; exposure to offensive posters, signs, or t-shirts; or mocking gestures or language. Only a small fraction of sexual harassment complaints were formally reported. A correlation was found between a student's reported exposure to sexual harassment and higher levels of stress. To varying degrees, sexual harassment eradication programs at each academy met the minimum criteria established by the Department of Defense. The academies had not evaluated their sexual harassment eradication programs in a routine, systematic manner. (A description of questionnaire methodology is appended.) (YLB)

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United States General Accounting Office

GAO

Report to Congressional Requesters

January 1994

ED 366 803

DOD SERVICE ACADEMIES

More Actions Needed to Eliminate Sexual Harassment

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United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

National Security and
International Affairs Division

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January 31, 1994

The Honorable Sam Nunn
Chairman, Committee on
Armed Services
United States Senate

The Honorable John Glenn
Chairman, Subcommittee on
Military Readiness and Defense
Infrastructure
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate

The Honorable Richard C. Shelby
Chairman, Subcommittee on
Force Requirements and
Personnel
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate

As requested, we reviewed the issue of sexual harassment at all three of the service academies. This report addresses (1) the extent to which sexual harassment occurred at the academies, the forms it took, and its effects on those subjected to it and (2) an evaluation of the academies' efforts to eradicate sexual harassment. This report expands upon the preliminary results we presented at the hearing on the service academies before the Subcommittee on Manpower and Personnel on June 2, 1992.

We are sending copies of this report to interested congressional committees; other interested Members of Congress; the Secretaries of Defense, the Army, the Air Force, and the Navy; and the Superintendents of the Military, Air Force, and Naval academies. We will also make copies available to other parties on request.

This report was prepared under the direction of Mark E. Gebicke, Director, Military Operations and Capabilities Issues. If you or your staff have any questions concerning this report, he can be reached on (202) 512-5140. The major contributors to this report are listed in appendix III.

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Assistant Comptroller General

Executive Summary

Purpose

In the spring of 1990, a student in her second year left the Naval Academy after an incident in which she was handcuffed to a urinal in the men's room and other midshipmen gathered, with some taking pictures. The Academy investigated the incident, and two midshipmen received demerits. One of the reasons the woman cited for leaving the Academy was her disillusionment with Academy officials over their inability to see that what had happened to her was not an isolated incident and her belief that Academy norms regarding the treatment of women were not appropriate. This and other incidents at the Naval Academy in 1989 and 1990 increased congressional interest in the treatment of students at the service academies.

At the request of the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Armed Services and the former Chairman of its Subcommittee on Manpower and Personnel, GAO undertook a review of sexual harassment of students at the Air Force, Naval, and Military academies. The objectives of the review were to (1) determine the extent to which sexual harassment occurred at the academies, the forms it took, and its effects on those subjected to it and (2) evaluate the academies' efforts to eradicate sexual harassment.

Background

Sexual harassment can be broadly defined as words, gestures, or actions with sexual connotations which are unwelcome and tend to intimidate, alarm, or abuse another person. The Department of Defense (DOD) established a Human Goals Charter in 1969 that calls for respect for the serviceman, servicewoman, civilian employee, and family members. The charter is the foundation of DOD's equal opportunity programs. DOD also has a formal policy to provide "an environment free from sexual harassment." In July 1991, the Secretary of Defense directed each DOD component to implement a program to eradicate sexual harassment and established minimum requirements for such a program.

At the core of GAO's review were surveys of academy students, faculty, and staff, and focus groups of academy students. Because the surveys were conducted in late 1990 and early 1991, GAO reviewed the results of more recent surveys conducted by the academies to determine whether its results were still valid.

The proportion of men to women at the academies has remained fairly constant over the last few years. In the class of 1996, women constitute 13.7 percent of the 1,240 midshipmen at the Naval Academy, 11.4 percent

of the 1,188 cadets at the Military Academy, and 12.6 percent of the 1,221 cadets at the Air Force Academy.

Results in Brief

The academies have not met DOD's broad human charter goals or its policy of providing an environment that is free from sexual harassment. Although only a few cases of sexual harassment are formally reported, responses to GAO's survey indicated that between 93 and 97 percent of academy women reported experiencing at least one form of sexual harassment during academic year 1991. The most common forms of harassment were derogatory personal comments and comments that standards had been lowered for women. GAO's survey showed a relationship between students experiencing a high degree of sexual harassment and those feeling stress.

The academies generally have complied with the minimum requirements DOD has established for sexual harassment eradication programs. For example, the academies have issued policy statements on the issue and have conducted prompt and thorough investigations of reported incidents. An exception to this compliance has been the lack of inspector general reviews conducted at the academies that included sexual harassment prevention and education as an item of special interest.

None of the academies has developed usable trend data to assess the effectiveness of its sexual harassment eradication program. The Military and Air Force academies, in particular, have not conducted routine, systematic program evaluations. A disciplined evaluation approach is critical to determining whether current efforts to eradicate harassment are working or new efforts should be tried.

In reviewing the efforts of other organizations, GAO also identified several approaches to sexual harassment prevention that may prove effective at the academies.

Principal Findings

Sexual Harassment Continues at Academies

Between half to about three quarters of academy women experienced various forms of harassment at least twice a month, GAO's survey shows. Women said the basis for the harassment was most often gender, rather than race, religion, or ethnic origin. The vast majority of men reported

never having experienced sexual harassment. Academy studies conducted after the GAO survey confirmed that sexual harassment remains a problem at the academies.

The harassment women experienced usually took the form of derogatory personal comments; comments that standards had been lowered for women; comments that women did not belong at the academy; exposure to offensive posters, signs, graffiti, or T-shirts; or mocking gestures, catcalls, accents, or slang. Few reported unwanted pressure for dates or unwanted sexual advances.

Only a small fraction of sexual harassment complaints are formally reported. For example, GAO's survey shows that between 93 and 97 percent of academy women reported experiencing at least one form of sexual harassment during academic year 1991. However, only 26 incidents were formally reported, and most of these involved more grievous forms of sexual misconduct. For instance, the most common type of reported behavior involved a male student entering a female student's room after hours and making unwanted sexual advances (such as kissing, touching, fondling) toward the sleeping student.

Sexual Harassment Can Produce Stress

GAO's survey results indicate that sexual harassment can have detrimental effects on cadets and midshipmen. A correlation exists between a student's reported exposure to sexual harassment and higher levels of stress. Similarly, a correlation exists between levels of stress and decreased interest in staying at the academy and making the military a career. However, because many factors may contribute to stress, GAO could not draw a direct link between harassment and decreased interest in staying at the academy and making the military a career.

Academy Programs Generally Met DOD Standards

To varying degrees, sexual harassment eradication programs at each of the academies met the minimum criteria established by DOD. For example, each academy

- issued a policy statement, though the content varied as to the extent of information on ways to deal with sexual harassment and on the consequences of harassing someone;
- offered training as part of leadership courses or human relations/equal opportunity training courses; and

- took some steps to evaluate its equal opportunity climate, although there was not always a clear link between the evaluation results and changes in training or other programs.

However, one area where the academies had not met the DOD criteria was inspector general reviews. As of September 1993, no inspector general reviews had been conducted at the academies that included sexual harassment prevention and education as an item of special interest. The Navy Inspector General intends to specifically examine sexual harassment during an inspection scheduled for late 1994. The Air Force Inspection Agency has scheduled a review at the Air Force Academy for 1995.

Academies Have Not Evaluated Their Sexual Harassment Eradication Programs in a Routine, Systematic Manner

The academies have evaluated their sexual harassment eradication programs to varying degrees. The Naval Academy has conducted three assessments of its equal opportunity climate since 1990 by surveying and interviewing students and collecting other types of data. The assessments have focused on identifying equal opportunity/sexual harassment problems and recommending solutions. However, the Academy had difficulty compiling the data needed for these assessments, and the data developed for each assessment cannot be readily compared to analyze trends. The Military and Air Force academies have evaluated elements of their equal opportunity programs, but these efforts were less focused and systematic than the evaluation approach taken by the Naval Academy.

As part of their sexual harassment eradication programs, other institutions have undertaken efforts that may be effective at the academies. Examples of these actions include preparing and distributing pamphlets or brochures on the issue; expanding the explanation of the range of behaviors that can be regarded as sexual harassment; offering a variety of personal strategies for dealing with sexual harassment; and varying the methods used in, and the content of, sexual harassment prevention training.

Recommendations

To better achieve DOD's goal of a sexual harassment-free environment, GAO recommends that the academy superintendents take the following actions:

- Gather and analyze data, through routine reviews of case files, student surveys, and focus groups, on the extent of reported and unreported incidents of sexual harassment.
- Evaluate, on a systematic basis, the effectiveness of sexual harassment eradication programs on the basis of such data.

- If the eradication programs are not proving to be effective, institute and evaluate different approaches to work toward eradicating sexual harassment. These approaches may include expanding the explanation of behaviors that could constitute sexual harassment, issuing sexual harassment pamphlets or brochures, offering lower risk confrontation options, and varying the methods and content of training.

Agency Comments

DOD generally agreed with GAO's findings, conclusions, and recommendations (see app. I). In commenting on the report, it stated that it is aware of continuing problems and is comprehensively addressing these problems at each of the academies. It also stated that the academies are leading institutions in establishing gender and racial tolerant climates.

Contents

Executive Summary		2
Chapter 1 Introduction		10
	Background on Sexual Harassment	10
	EEOC and DOD Provisions Regarding Sexual Harassment	14
	Summary of Regulations at the Service Academies	16
	Objectives, Scope, and Methodology	18
Chapter 2 Many Academy Women Experience Sexual Harassment on a Recurring Basis		20
	Academy Students Experienced Various Forms of Harassment	20
	Fewer Academy Faculty Members and Staff Perceive Sexual Harassment as a Problem	23
	Academies' Own Surveys Found Sexual Harassment	23
	Sexual Harassment Appears to Be Underreported	25
Chapter 3 Women at the Academies Tend to Deal With Sexual Harassment Informally		28
	Academies Have Many Channels for Surfacing Grievances	28
	Perceived Effectiveness of Various Strategies for Dealing With Harassment	30
	Student Perceptions of Consequences of Reporting Harassment	34
Chapter 4 Sexual Harassment Can Produce Stress		39
	Victims of Sexual Harassment Experienced Higher Levels of Stress	39
	Stress May Increase Attrition	42
	Stress May Deter Some From Making the Military a Career	42
Chapter 5 Academy Actions to Eradicate Sexual Harassment		45
	Academies Have Generally Met DOD's Criteria for Effective Sexual Harassment Prevention Programs	45
	The Academies Have Taken Additional Steps to Deal With Sexual Harassment, but Program Evaluation Efforts Lack Systematic Approach	50
	Other Options for Sexual Harassment Prevention Programs	54
	Conclusions	56
	Recommendations	56

Agency Comments 57

Appendixes

Appendix I: Comments From the Department of Defense 58
Appendix II: Description of Questionnaire Methodology 59
Appendix III: Major Contributors to This Report 64

Tables

Table 1.1: Sexual Harassment Offenses Under the Uniform Code of Military Justice 18
Table 2.1: Academy Incidents Involving Sexual Misconduct, Academic Years 1988-93 26
Table II.1: Sampling Errors for Various Academy Subgroups 62

Figures

Figure 2.1: Percentage of Academy Women Reporting Having Experienced Sexual Harassment in Academic Year 1990-91 21
Figure 3.1: Perceived Effectiveness of the Strategy of Confronting the Person Responsible 31
Figure 3.2: Perceived Effectiveness of Other Personal Strategies for Dealing With Sexual Harassment 32
Figure 3.3: Perceived Effectiveness of Formal Reporting Channels 33
Figure 3.4: Student Perceptions of Positive Consequences of Reporting Sexual Harassment 35
Figure 3.5: Student Perceptions of Negative Consequences of Reporting Sexual Harassment 37
Figure 4.1: Relationship Between Sexual Harassment and Psychological Stress Among Academy Students 40
Figure 4.2: Relationship Between Sexual Harassment and Physical Stress Among Academy Students 41
Figure 4.3: Relationship Between Psychological Stress Experienced and Frequency of Thoughts About Leaving the Academy 42
Figure 4.4: Relationship Between Psychological Stress Experienced and Likelihood of Not Making the Military a Career 43
Figure 4.5: Relationship Between Psychological Stress Experienced and Decreased Career Motivation 44

Abbreviations

DOD	Department of Defense
EEOC	Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
UCMJ	Uniform Code of Military Justice

Introduction

Sexual harassment has become an issue throughout American society, and the U.S. military has been no exception. Some recent, highly publicized cases of sexual harassment—the treatment of women during the Persian Gulf War, the conduct of Navy officers at the 1991 Tailhook convention, and the treatment of women at the Naval and the Air Force academies—have raised questions about how well the Department of Defense (DOD) and the military services are dealing with the issue. Sexual harassment at the service academies is the specific focus of this report.

The proportion of men to women at the academies has remained fairly constant over the last few years. In the class of 1996, women constitute 13.7 percent of the 1,240 midshipmen at the Naval Academy, 11.4 percent of the 1,188 cadets at the Military Academy, and 12.6 percent of the 1,221 cadets at the Air Force Academy.

Background on Sexual Harassment

In 1980, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) defined sexual harassment as a form of discrimination based on gender and a violation of title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964:

"Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment."[1]

The EEOC guidelines and subsequent court decisions delineated two types of sexual harassment in work environments: (1) quid pro quo harassment and (2) hostile environment harassment. Quid pro quo harassment involves the exchange of employment benefits by a supervisor or employer for sexual favors from a subordinate employee. Hostile environment harassment consists of conduct, such as verbal or physical abuse, that creates an intimidating or offensive working environment. The prohibitions against sexual harassment for civilian workers are contained in federal law and guidelines, while the prohibitions for military personnel are contained in DOD policy statements, directives, and instructions on equal opportunity. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination in "terms, conditions, or privileges, of employment"

[1]29 C.F.R. 1604.11(a) (1992).

because of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.[2] Since the early 1970s, the courts and EEOC have interpreted the law to mean that employers must strive to maintain a workplace environment that is free of racial, sexual, ethnic, or religious discrimination, and employers have been held liable when racial or ethnic harassment created a psychologically debilitating environment. During the 1970s, the concept of harassment was extended to include the basis of sex.

Sexual harassment has been reported as a problem throughout American society, including the private sector, the federal civil service, the military, and the academic world. Accordingly, sexual harassment, to the extent it occurs in the service academies, reflects the societal problem. A number of studies have found that more than half of the female college students surveyed reported experiencing some form of harassment. The most frequently reported type of harassment experienced at civilian colleges was sexist or derogatory remarks or comments.[3] In addition, a 1993 Harris Poll of public school students in grades 8 through 11, commissioned by the American Association of University Women, showed that four of every five students have experienced some form of sexual harassment in school. The most frequently experienced forms of sexual harassment were sexual comments, jokes, gestures, or looks, followed by being touched, grabbed, or pinched in a sexual way and being intentionally brushed up against in a sexual way. While the negative impact of sexual harassment in school is significant for all students, girls suffer greater effects than boys.

Sexual Harassment Is Not Easy to Define

Determining precisely what actions constitute sexual harassment has been the subject of some debate. While the Civil Rights Act of 1964 declared that discrimination on the basis of sex was illegal, it was not until the 1970s that sexual harassment was cited as a form of illegal discrimination. In 1986, the Supreme Court, in a unanimous decision in Meritor Savings Bank, FSB v. Vinson, 477 U.S. 57 (1986), held that the claim of hostile environment sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination actionable under title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

While the concept of hostile environment is now accepted, consensus regarding what constitutes such an environment and whose perspective it should be viewed from has been problematic. The most consistent finding

[2]42 U.S.C. 2000-e2(a)(1). Title VII does not apply to the uniformed members of the armed services. See Roper v. Department of the Army, 832 F2d 247 (2nd Cir. 1987).

[3]A 1981 survey at Iowa State University, a 1985-86 Department of Education survey at two large public universities, and a 1989 survey of students at all five University of Minnesota campuses.

of studies aimed at defining sexual harassment has been that men and women differ in their views regarding what constitutes sexually harassing behavior, with women more likely to label a given situation as harassment than men. A 1984 article in the Harvard Law Review noted that studies

"show a high incidence in the workplace of conduct that working women perceive to be sexually harassing. Some of these studies, however, also show that many of the actions women find offensive are perceived by men to be harmless and innocent. This gap between male and female perceptions indicates a lack of social consensus on appropriate standards of behavior and reflects the ambiguity of existing social norms."[4]

Examples of the different perspectives can be seen in the results of a study reported in 1985. Whereas 67 percent of men surveyed said they would be complimented if they were propositioned by a woman at work, only 17 percent of women said they would take such a proposition as a compliment. In addition, 84 percent of the women considered sexual harassment to include sexual touching, but only 59 percent of the men did.[5]

The different perspectives of men and women have recently been recognized in the courts. Historically, the standard used to determine the existence of a hostile environment has been what the "reasonable person" would find offensive. However, in a 1991 case, Ellison v. Brady, 924 F.2d 872 (9th Cir. 1991), the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals found that the reasonable person standard was implicitly biased toward a male perspective. The Court relied instead on the "reasonable woman" standard. Other courts have adopted the reasonable woman standard.[6] In 1993, the Supreme Court, in Harris v. Forklift Systems, Inc., 507 U.S. (1993), held that an abusive or hostile work environment is one that a reasonable person would find hostile or abusive and which the victim subjectively perceives to be abusive. It went on to hold whether an environment is hostile or abusive can be determined only by looking at all the circumstances, which may include the frequency of the discriminatory conduct; its severity; whether it is physically threatening or humiliating, or a mere offensive utterance; and whether it unreasonably interferes with an employee's work performance.

[4]"Sexual Harassment Claims of Abusive Work Environment Under Title VII," 97 Harvard Law Review 1449 (1984).

[5]Barbara A. Gutek, Sex and the Workplace (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1985).

[6]Robinson v. Jacksonville Shipyards, Inc., 760 F.Supp. 1486 (M.D. Fla. 1991); Schneider v. NBC News Bureau, 56 FEP 1602 (S.D. Fla. 1991); and Radtke v. Everett, 56 FEP 923 (Mich. Ct. App. 1991).

Defining what actions constitute sexual harassment has been no less problematic in the military and at the academies. A Navy study found that the extent of sexual harassment varied depending upon how the question was phrased. For instance, fewer women responded affirmatively that they had been subjected to sexual harassment than responded affirmatively to questions on specific forms of harassing behavior. Similarly, after viewing videotaped role plays as part of the Naval Academy's sexual harassment eradication program, midshipmen disagreed about whether a given vignette did or did not constitute sexual harassment.

Effects of Sexual Harassment

Social science research over the past decade has documented that sexual harassment can have both psychological and physical effects. According to the American Psychiatric Association, stress as a result of sexual harassment is recognized as a specific, diagnosable problem. Among the stress effects suffered is "emotional stress," which covers a range of responses, including anger, fear of physical safety, anxiety, depression, guilt, humiliation, and embarrassment.

In 1982, the Working Women's Institute found that about 90 percent of sexual harassment victims experienced some form of psychological stress. In a 1988 study of the harassment of women by their male peers on college campuses, researchers found the following impact on women:

"The cumulative effect of repeated harassment can be devastating. It reinforces self-doubt and can affect a woman's entire academic experience. Some women who experience the more severe forms of harassment may even find it difficult to trust or have friendships with men. When harassment comes primarily from classmates in a particular field, some women may change classes or majors, change schools, or drop out altogether . . . Besides these psychological effects, peer harassment can cause physical symptoms such as headaches, stomachaches, and pinched nerves in the neck . . . ."[7]

Physical stress of harassment victims may manifest itself as sleeping problems, headaches, weight changes, and other physical ailments. The Working Women's Institute survey found that 63 percent of questionnaire respondents who experienced harassment also experienced physical stress problems, most frequently nausea, headaches, or tiredness.

[7]Jean O'Gorman Hughes and Bernice R. Sandler, Project on the Status and Education of Women, Association of American Colleges, Peer Harassment: Hassles for Women on Campus, September 1988, pp. 1-2.

Responses to Sexual Harassment Incidents

Research has found that because of a long history of silence on the subject, many women feel uncomfortable, embarrassed, or ashamed when they talk about personal incidents of sexual harassment. In a 1978 survey conducted by the Working Women's Institute, the women who took action to stop the harassment found that nothing was done, they were not taken seriously, or they suffered repercussions.

As a consequence of these fears, women tend to respond to sexual harassment with various coping behaviors. In testimony during a 1991 sexual harassment case, Robinson v. Jacksonville Shipyards, Inc., a national consultant in the area of sexual harassment prevention stated that typical coping methods include: (1) denying the impact of the event or blocking it out, (2) avoiding the workplace or the harasser, (3) engaging in joking or other banter to defuse the situation, (4) telling the harasser to stop, and (5) threatening to make or actually making a complaint. According to a 1990 study on the use of sexual harassment grievance procedures, most victims of harassment stated that they simply wanted to end the offending behavior rather than punish the offender. The goal of a coping strategy would be to end the harassment rather than judge (and punish, if appropriate) the offender.[8]

EEOC and DOD Provisions Regarding Sexual Harassment

EEOC provides policy guidance on preventing sexual harassment in the workplace. DOD provisions on sexual harassment are largely based on this guidance. EEOC Notice N-915-050, "Policy Guidance on Current Issues of Sexual Harassment" (Mar. 19, 1990), states that management must

> "take all steps necessary to prevent sexual harassment from occurring, such as affirmatively raising the subject, expressing strong disapproval, developing appropriate sanctions, informing employees of their right to raise and how to raise the issue of harassment under Title VII, and developing methods to sensitize all concerned."

DOD provisions regarding sexual harassment are contained in various equal opportunity documents. These documents include the DOD Human Goals Charter, first issued in August 1969; DOD Directive 1350.2, "The Department of Defense Military Equal Opportunity Program," dated December 23, 1988; DOD Instruction 1350.3, "Affirmative Action Planning and Assessment Process," dated February 29, 1988; and a Secretary of Defense memorandum, "Department of Defense Strategies to Eradicate Sexual Harassment in the Military and Civilian Environment," dated July 12, 1991.

[8]Stephanie Riger, "Gender Dilemmas in Sexual Harassment Policies and Procedures," American Psychologist, May 1991, pp. 497-505.

The Human Goals Charter is the foundation of DOD equal opportunity programs. Since it was issued, it has been endorsed by each Secretary of Defense, most recently by former Secretary of Defense Cheney on April 17, 1990. According to a DOD equal opportunity official, the charter is being revised and will be submitted for approval by the Secretary of Defense and the secretaries of the military services once the secretaries' nominations have been confirmed by the Senate. The charter states:

"Our Nation was founded on the principle that the individual has infinite dignity and worth. The Department of Defense, which exists to keep the Nation secure and at peace, must always be guided by this principle. In all that we do, we must show respect for the serviceman, the servicewoman, the civilian employee, and family members, recognizing their individual needs, aspirations, and capabilities."

DOD's equal opportunity directive states that it is DOD policy to "provide for an environment that is free from sexual harassment by eliminating this form of discrimination in the Department of Defense." The directive further states that it is DOD policy to support the military equal opportunity program and to use the chain of command to promote, support, and enforce the program. The directive contains a definition of sexual harassment that is consistent with the EEOC guidelines.

DOD's affirmative action instruction focuses on the DOD policy for the military services to monitor and report on selected dimensions of their personnel programs to ensure equal opportunity and fair treatment for all service members through affirmative actions and other initiatives. The instruction also assigns responsibilities and establishes minimum reporting requirements.

In response to the findings of the 1988 Merit Systems Protection Board survey of federal employees and the 1989 survey of DOD employees that sexual harassment was a problem in the government and the military, the Secretary of Defense, in a July 12, 1991, memorandum, directed each DOD component to implement a sexual harassment eradication program that would incorporate, at a minimum, the following seven elements: (1) annual policy statements; (2) training programs for all personnel; (3) quality control mechanisms to ensure that training is working; (4) prompt, thorough investigations and resolutions of complaints; (5) procedures to hold commanders, supervisors, and managers accountable for providing guidance to personnel; (6) designation of sexual harassment as a special interest item for DOD Inspector General inspections/visits; and (7) accountability for compliance reflected in

annual performance ratings and fitness reports as well as possible loss of benefits and imposition of penalties. Annual reports are required in response to this memorandum. The reports are to include a record of accomplishments as well as plans for the future.

Summary of Regulations at the Service Academies

Each academy has provisions in its disciplinary system prohibiting harassment based on gender, religion, race, and ethnic origin. These prohibitions may be either explicit or implicit under standards of behavior. Punishments can vary from minor administrative sanctions (such as demerits) to dismissal, depending upon the severity of the behavior and a student's prior record.

Naval Academy

Naval Academy regulations distinguish aggravated sexual harassment from other forms of sexual harassment. Aggravated sexual harassment includes requests for sexual favors to a member of a lower class when submission to such a request is made a condition to the receipt of some privilege, right, or other benefit. Such actions constitute quid pro quo sexual harassment. Other sexual harassment comprises forms of harassment that are not specifically stated, regardless of seriousness.

Military Academy

At the Military Academy, the regulations of the U.S. Corps of Cadets define sexual harassment as (1) influencing, offering to influence, or threatening the pay or job of another person in exchange for sexual favors and (2) deliberate or repeated offensive comments, gestures, or physical contact of a sexual nature in a work- or duty-related environment. The regulations state that harassment in any form or for any reason is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

Air Force Academy

Air Force Academy definitions regarding sexual harassment are contained in (1) Air Force Regulation 30-2 (Social Actions Program) and (2) Air Force Cadet Wing Regulation 537-6 (Personal and Professional Conduct).

Air Force Regulation 30-2 provides the following definition of sexual harassment:

"Unwelcomed sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of sexual nature when:

"(a) submission to or rejection of such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of a person's job, pay, or career, or

"(b) submission to or rejection of such conduct by a person is used as a basis for career or employment decisions affecting that person, or

"(c) such conduct interferes with an individual's performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment, or

"(d) any person in a supervisory or command position uses or condones implicit or explicit sexual behavior to control, influence or affect the career, pay, job of a military member or civilian employee, or

"(e) any military member or civilian employee makes deliberate or repeated unwelcomed verbal comments, gestures, or physical contact of a sexual nature."

Air Force Cadet Wing Regulation 537-6 contains a briefer, but similar definition. The regulation defines sexual harassment as

"sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature if (1) such behavior is made explicitly or implicitly a term or condition or a person's job, pay, or career, or (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct has the purpose or effect of interfering with an individual's performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment."

Sexual Harassment Under the Uniform Code of Military Justice

The academies also can prosecute an individual charged with sexual harassment under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). This code applies to uniformed members of the military services, including cadets and midshipmen. A September 2, 1988, Secretary of Defense memorandum to the secretaries of the military departments provides examples of conduct which might constitute both sexual harassment and an offense under UCMJ (see table 1.1).

Table 1.1: Sexual Harassment Offenses Under the Uniform Code of Military Justice

If the sexual harasser:	The sexual harasser may also be guilty of:	Violation of:
1. Threatens to influence adversely the career, salary, or job of another in exchange for sexual favors.	Extortion. Assault. Communicating a threat.	Article 127 Article 128 Article 134
2. Offers rewards for sexual favors.	Bribery and graft.	Article 134
3. Makes sexual comments and/or gestures.	Indecent, insulting, or obscene language prejudicial to good order. Provoking speech or gestures. Disrespect.	Article 134 Article 117 Article 89 Article 91
4. Makes sexual contact.	Assault consummated by a battery. Indecent assault. Rape.	Article 128 Article 134 Article 120
5. Engages in sexual harassment to the detriment of job performance.	Dereliction of duty.	Article 92
6. Is an officer.	Conduct unbecoming an officer.	Article 133
7. Is cruel to or maltreats any person subject to his/her orders.	Cruelty and maltreatment.	Article 93
8. Uses his/her official position to gain sexual favors or advantages.	Failure to obey a lawful general order.	Article 92

Punishment under UCMJ usually takes one of two forms: a trial by court martial or commanding officer's nonjudicial punishment under article 15. Nonjudicial punishment is available to any commanding officer as disciplinary punishment for minor offenses and may consist of such punishments as restriction, confinement, forfeiture of pay, or extra duties.

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on Armed Services and the former Chairman of its Subcommittee on Manpower and Personnel asked us to undertake a broad review of student issues at the military service academies. We have issued separate reports on academics, gender and racial disparities, and hazing and the treatment of fourth class cadets and midshipmen. This report focuses on sexual harassment at the academies. Specifically, our objectives were to (1) determine the extent to which sexual harassment occurred at the academies, the forms it took, and its effects on those subjected to it and (2) evaluate the academies' efforts to

eradicate sexual harassment. We testified in June 1992 on the preliminary results of our review.[9]

We reviewed the EEOC guidance, DOD provisions, and Department of Education regulations relating to sexual harassment. At the academies, we reviewed their rules and regulations on conduct in general and sexual harassment specifically, studies related to the treatment of academy women and sexual harassment, and files on disciplinary cases involving sexual harassment and sexual misconduct related offenses. We interviewed academy officials, faculty, and cadets and midshipmen. We also obtained information on sexual harassment prevention programs at other institutions to determine whether they had features that could be effective at the academies.

We administered questionnaires at each of the three academies to samples of cadets, midshipmen, and faculty and to all members of the commandant's staff during late 1990 and early 1991. A detailed discussion of our survey and related methodological issues appears in appendix II. We reviewed the results of more recent surveys conducted by the academies to determine whether our results were still valid. At each academy, we conducted several focus group discussions with student representatives of various academy organizations that emphasized professional interests, ethnic interests, athletic interests, and gender interests to clarify information obtained from our questionnaires.

We performed our review at the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland; the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado; and the Military Academy in West Point, New York.

We requested written comments from DOD, and it generally agreed with our findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

We performed our review from June 1990 to September 1993 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

[9]DOD Service Academies: Status Report on Reviews of Student Treatment (GAO/T-NSIAD-92-41, June 2, 1992).

Many Academy Women Experience Sexual Harassment on a Recurring Basis

More than half of the academy women responding to our survey indicated experiencing various forms of sexual harassment at least twice a month. The primary type of sexual harassment they experienced was verbal. Fewer women reported unwanted pressure for dates or unwanted sexual advances. Our data, as well as the results of subsequent surveys by the academies, indicate that the academies are a long way from achieving the Secretary of Defense's goal of "an environment that is free from sexual harassment." Furthermore, our review indicates that the number of sexual harassment incidents that are formally reported understates the extent of the sexual harassment problem.

Academy Students Experienced Various Forms of Harassment

The percentage of female academy students who reported experiencing one or more forms of harassment[1] on a recurring basis was as follows:

- 50 percent at the Naval Academy,
- 76 percent at the Military Academy, and
- 59 percent at the Air Force Academy.[2]

About 90 percent of the women perceived that the harassment they experienced was based on their gender, as opposed to race, religion, or ethnic origin. The most frequently reported forms of harassing behavior were verbal. Few women reported experiencing the quid pro quo form of harassment. For example, female students complained very little about unwanted pressure for dates and unwanted sexual advances. The survey results were corroborated by individual write-in comments and focus group discussions.

The majority of men reported never having experienced harassment. The percentage of male academy students who reported experiencing one or more forms of harassment on a recurring basis was as follows:

- 11 percent at the Naval Academy,
- 24 percent at the Military Academy, and
- 20 percent at the Air Force Academy.

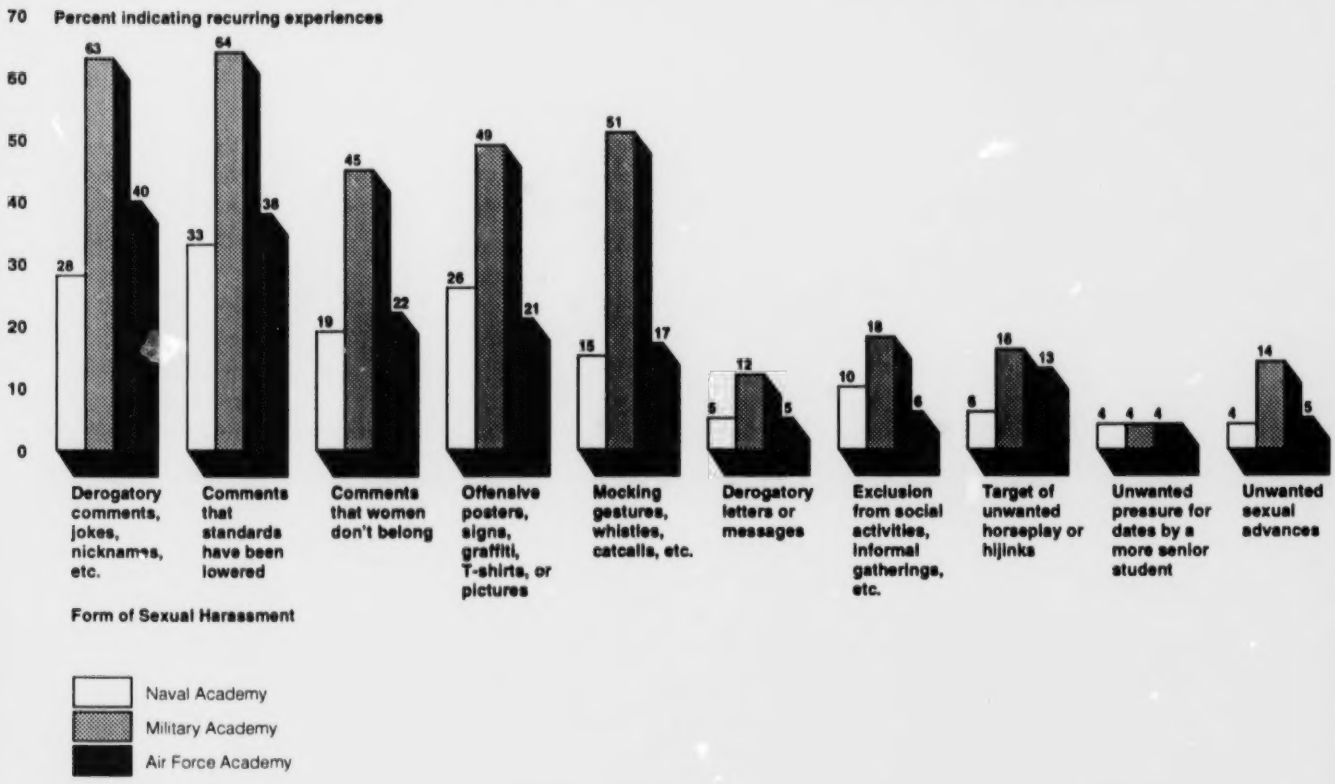
[1]Our survey included 10 forms of harassment that were derived from previous surveys of harassment conducted among federal workers by the Merit Systems Protection Board in 1980 and 1987 and a 1988 survey of active duty military personnel conducted by the Defense Manpower Data Center. We tailored the items somewhat to the academy environments.

[2]We asked respondents to indicate how often they experienced each of 10 forms of harassment. The response categories were "Never," "1 or 2 times a year," "A couple of times a semester," "A couple of times a month," "A couple of times a week," and "Daily or almost daily." For presentation purposes, we have combined the last three categories into one covering "A couple of times a month or more often," which we see as representing a recurring exposure.

Of the men who reported experiencing recurring harassment at the Naval Academy, 9 percent perceived that the harassment they experienced was based on their gender, as compared to 12 percent at the Military Academy and 15 percent at the Air Force Academy.

Figure 2.1 shows the percentage of academy women who responded as having experienced recurring sexual harassment for each of the 10 forms of harassment included in our survey.

Figure 2.1: Percentage of Academy Women Reporting Having Experienced Sexual Harassment in Academic Year 1990-91



Source: Responses to GAO questionnaire.

Examples of the behaviors women experienced included a full-page list of reasons why beer is better than women appearing in an academy humor magazine, the distribution of a former Secretary of the Navy's statement critical of the role of women in the Navy through the midshipmen's mail and display of the statement on dormitory bulletin boards, and the spreading of unfounded rumors about female students' dating upperclassmen.[3] One focus group characterized the types of harassment as follows: a lot of little things, such as comments about women in their uniforms, prank phone calls, and comments from alumni, faculty, officers, guests, and sponsors.[4] The group indicated that derogatory comments about their gender occurred primarily in the dormitory but also in classrooms and social settings.

The following write-in comments by respondents to the questionnaire show the extent to which some male students resist the presence of women at the academies and the cost of reporting harassment as seen by some female students.

"Women don't belong here! The majority of the women here expect special treatment because they are women. They enter a world that has been dominated for a long time by men and they expect us all to get along. It doesn't work! . . . I know a great number of women come here just to have a 10:1 man/woman ratio so they can have sex as often as they'd like . . . . The last thing we need is more women officers here."

"I wish I had been born with my parents' generation before females destroyed this place. The West Point I attend is nothing like that I read about that produced MEN like Lee, Eisenhower, and the many other brave SOLDIERS. What makes them want to become men? Even [though] I would never openly harass women, I hope they understand they are not welcome here."

"While the academy has done a good job of bringing women into the academy, it seems that lately all that they have been doing is patting themselves on the back. There is still a lot of resentment of women being here and a lot of harassment and sexual harassment cases that never get reported because if a girl complains her male classmates will resent her."

"I am a female plebe and I know for a fact that I'd get reprisals for turning someone in for a [conduct] violation ESPECIALLY upperclassmen. I spoke to a female upperclassman in my company about my team leader. I had been feeling very sexually harassed by him. She is the one who turned him in, and now, about a month and a half after she turned him in, I'm

[3]Fraternization (dating between a freshman and an upperclassman) is prohibited at the academies.

[4]Sponsors are officer and civilian families residing near the academies with whom students can associate informally.

still catching all kinds of heat about it. Very few people among the upperclass in my company will speak to me, and my own classmates treat me like a crybaby . . . My team leader hates me now openly, and my chain of command does nothing to hide their feelings either. I feel like I'm being harassed in 2 ways. First, by my team leaders, secondly by everyone who knows, which is about 40% of my company."

Fewer Academy Faculty Members and Staff Perceive Sexual Harassment as a Problem

Compared with female students, fewer academy faculty and staff perceived that sexual harassment was a problem. In response to our questions on the extent of harassment students experienced in academic year 1989-90, the percentage of commandant's staff who perceived that the average female student was exposed to some form of harassment on a recurring basis was as follows:

- 41 percent at the Naval Academy,
- 59 percent at the Military Academy, and
- 41 percent at the Air Force Academy.

The percentage of academy faculty who perceived that the average woman was exposed to some form of harassment on a recurring basis was as follows:

- 40 percent at the Naval Academy,
- 35 percent at the Military Academy, and
- 32 percent at the Air Force Academy.

Academies' Own Surveys Found Sexual Harassment

In addition to our survey, each academy has collected information, to varying degrees, from its students regarding sexual harassment. The results of those surveys conducted more recently than ours indicate that sexual harassment continues to exist at the academies. Because the methodologies of these studies were not consistent with our methodology, we were not able to evaluate whether the level of sexual harassment had changed.

The 1993 Naval Academy's command assessment of the equal opportunity climate indicated that about 53 percent of female students totally or moderately agreed that sexual harassment (subtle or overt) was a problem, compared with about 31 percent of male students.

The Military Academy's survey of the senior class of 1993 indicated that 80 percent of the female respondents either observed or personally

experienced sexist comments being made at movies or sporting events. In the last year, 52 percent of the women reported that they had frequently heard disparaging remarks about women at West Point from other students. Twenty percent of the women responded that they had experienced the situation at night, after lights out, where a cadet entered their rooms and improperly touched them.

Since our survey, the Air Force Academy surveyed cadets on the Academy's social climate in March 1992. In describing the results of this survey to the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services, the Academy stated that

"there were some indications of a chronic nature that the cadet climate may be offensive, intimidating, or threatening to women, if not discriminatory in some ways. The common attitude that sexism or harassment exists is evident in the lower endorsement for women to be as effective in leadership roles, for women to be respected for their leadership, and for their ability to give constructive feedback. Additionally, there is evidence that sexist jokes or demeaning remarks are fairly pervasive, and the superior/subordinate relationship between male and female cadets is more than occasionally compromised by their fraternization."

Specific results from the survey indicated that 52 percent of male cadets heard sexist jokes or demeaning remarks about women on a daily basis. Seventy-eight percent of the female cadets reported the same.

Additionally, in September and December 1992, the Air Officers Commanding (the commissioned officers in charge of student squadrons) conducted focus groups within their squadrons to determine the extent of sexual harassment among cadets and awareness of human relations issues. During the first series of focus group discussions, cadets raised several issues from these discussions, including the destructive nature of the verbal harassment throughout the cadet wing and the offensiveness (to some cadets) of adult reading material (magazines and pictures) in dormitory rooms. The second series of focus group discussions found that (1) a minority of cadets were unfamiliar with or unwilling to see the importance of human relations, (2) more education was necessary, (3) human relations programs needed more emphasis, (4) racial as well as gender issues needed to be addressed, (5) clarification was needed on the perceived issue of quotas, and (6) cadets wanted more feedback when problems occurred to avoid rumors.

The Air Force Academy's Ad Hoc Committee on Respect and Dignity reported to the Superintendent in May 1993 that

"disturbing numbers of female cadets reported to the Superintendent that instances of sexual assault, improper fondling, and sexual harassment and discrimination had occurred to them while at the Academy. Only a tiny fraction of these instances had ever been reported. Perhaps for that reason, male cadets tended to be far less aware of the extent of such problems than the female cadets were. For example, a much larger percentage of female cadets than male cadets said they personally knew a cadet who had been a victim of sexual assault while at the Academy. In other words, something that was relatively common knowledge among female cadets was far less well known by the males."

Sexual Harassment Appears to Be Underreported

From 1988 to 1993, students at the three academies officially reported 107 sexual misconduct incidents, including incidents of sexual harassment. Our survey results suggest that the reported sexual harassment cases represent a small fraction of the total that actually occur. The wide gap in the number of actual and reported incidents is understandable given the tendency of women to deal with harassment informally and their hesitancy to formally report an incident. Specifically, of the female respondents, 43 percent at the Military Academy, 37 percent at the Naval Academy, and 53 percent at the Air Force Academy indicated a hesitancy to report harassment for fear of reprisal. (See ch. 3 for a discussion of the negative consequences associated with reporting harassment.)

Because sexual harassment may be prosecuted under various offense categories, we reviewed all available misconduct cases filed between June 1988 and May 1993. The academies had identified some cases as being within their definitions of sexual harassment (discussed in ch. 1). At the Naval Academy, we reviewed cases charged under the two sexual harassment conduct codes as well as sexual misconduct cases and cases involving possible violations of UCMJ. Since the Military and Air Force academies did not have specific conduct offense categories for sexual harassment, we reviewed all available misconduct cases, paying particular attention to cases charged under conduct unbecoming an officer and error in judgment with major effect. We applied the definitions in EEOC guidance and academy regulations and the examples used in the DOD and GAO questionnaires to the descriptions in the cases to identify possible sexual

misconduct cases. Table 2.1 shows the distribution, by academy, of the 107 sexual misconduct[5] cases we identified.

Table 2.1: Academy Incidents Involving Sexual Misconduct, Academic Years 1988-93

Academic year	Naval Academy	Military Academy	Air Force Academy
1988	1	1	3
1989	3	2	10
1990	5	8	10
1991	13	9	5
1992	2	12	6
1993	2	8	7
Total	**26**	**40**	**41**

Our survey results indicate that the number of formally reported cases involving sexual harassment significantly understates the extent of the problem. According to our survey, between 93 and 97 percent of the 1,415 women at the academies experienced some form of sexual harassment during academic year 1991. However, we found only 26 reported incidents of sexual misconduct during this period.

The incidents that were formally reported tended to be more grievous forms of sexual misconduct. Generally, the forms of sexual harassment included in the written responses to our questionnaire and discussed in the focus groups were not the kind that students would report to a formal complaint system. For example, women reported to us that

- it was commonplace for men to make remarks and tell jokes at meals or in classes;
- unchecked comments and jokes would be made about a female commander in drill trousers;
- harassment was a lot of little things, such as comments about women in their uniforms, derogatory name calling, prank phone calls, offensive posters, and comments from alumni, faculty, guests, and sponsors; and
- they were subjected to upperclassmen entering their rooms during study time and bothering them.

On the other hand, examples of sexual misconduct being formally reported more frequently are the following:

[5]At the Naval Academy, sexual misconduct is a specific conduct offense and refers to certain sexually related conduct, both consensual and nonconsensual. A conviction under this conduct offense could result in separation from the Academy. The term "sexual misconduct" in this discussion is used in a more general sense to include a range of behaviors that could be considered sexual harassment.

- A male student entering a female student's room after curfew and making unwanted sexual advances (such as kissing, touching, or fondling) toward the sleeping student.
- An upperclass male student conducting the training of an underclass female student in a sexually offensive manner. For example, an upperclass male student ordered a freshman female student to stay with him after he dismissed the rest of the squad and to stand near him. He then attempted to kiss her against her will.
- A male student making various unwanted sexual advances (physical contact) toward a female student.

In addition, examples of sexual misconduct being formally reported at least once are the following:

- A male student videotaping or watching a female student taking a shower.
- A male student sexually assaulting a female student.
- A male student raping a female student.
- A male student making unwanted sexual advances toward an underage civilian female.
- A male student exhibiting sexually suggestive behavior toward another male student.

Women at the Academies Tend to Deal With Sexual Harassment Informally

Academy students reported that taking no action or avoiding the person responsible were the least effective strategies for dealing with harassment, while they reported that confronting the person or reporting the incident to the chain of command were the most effective strategies. Further, there was general agreement that if an incident was reported, it would be thoroughly investigated and the offender would be appropriately disciplined. However, there was also general consensus that there would be negative consequences to reporting the harassment, such as being viewed as a "crybaby," being viewed less favorably by the student and officer chains of command, or receiving lower military performance grades. Consequently, students tended to deal with sexual harassment informally if possible.

Academies Have Many Channels for Surfacing Grievances

All the academies have a policy of encouraging students to resolve problems at the lowest level possible, starting with confronting the individual with whom one has a problem. The student may also try to resolve the problem informally by consulting with an academy chaplain, counselor, or others outside the official chain of command. However, all the academies have procedures for formally reporting a grievance to the chain of command. In addition, the academies offer alternative official channels. Finally, students may make use of external channels, such as reporting the incidents to the media or Members of Congress.

Informal Channels

Students at the academies have access to a variety of means for informally seeking advice and counseling on personal problems, including sexual harassment. For instance, they may consult with chaplains, counselors (including legal advisers), friends, doctors, nurses, mentors, sponsors, and faculty advisers. If a student is sensitive about keeping any discussions of problems confidential, the chaplains and legal advisers are bound by a privileged relationship, while others provide limited confidentiality and may report problems to academy authorities.

Formal Channels

If a student wishes to formally report a grievance, or if more informal attempts at resolving the problem have failed to be satisfactory, he or she may report the problem to the student chain of command. If this approach was not satisfactory, the matter could then be reported to the officer chain of command. All the academies have procedures for investigating and resolving formal complaints of sexual harassment. In general, the complaints are handled through the academy disciplinary systems.

Alternative Channels

Because a victim of sexual harassment may be reluctant to file a complaint with the chain of command, the academies have established alternative official channels for reporting sexual harassment. The alternative channels are unique to each academy.

Naval Academy

The Academy Commandant established an ombudsman program in August 1990 to provide an alternative channel for reporting grievances. Such a program was recommended in an internal study on the assimilation of women at the Academy. Two commissioned officers outside the chain of command serve as ombudsmen to assist in hearing any problems not resolved within the chain of command. According to Academy officials, the ombudsmen maintain no formal records of grievances brought before them. The Academy also has six senior enlisted advisers who can discuss problems with midshipmen and provide information and advice. Communication with neither the ombudsmen nor the senior enlisted advisers is considered privileged or confidential.

Within the Office of the Inspector General of the Navy, there is a toll-free fraud, waste, and abuse hotline that may be used for reporting grievances. This hotline is available to all naval personnel, including Academy midshipmen.

Military Academy

The Military Academy offers three alternative channels to cadets. First, cadets may send electronic mail messages to the Commandant. Second, two noncommissioned officers outside the chain of command are specially trained to handle harassment issues. Third, a problem may be reported to the Inspector General of the Military Academy, who has conducted investigations in response to allegations concerning human relations problems.

Air Force Academy

Cadets have several alternatives for reporting incidents of sexual harassment. First, cadets may contact the Cadet Counseling Center. As part of the Academy's Social Actions Program, the staff of the Cadet Counseling Center provides professional counseling and conducts complaint clarifications and investigations of possible equal opportunity and treatment violations. The Center has also employed other strategies such as writing letters to students who have engaged in sexually harassing behavior and mediating on behalf of students.

Cadets also may turn to the Way of Life Committee for assistance. The Way of Life Committee was established about 20 years ago to address social climate and "quality of life" issues that had a direct impact on both

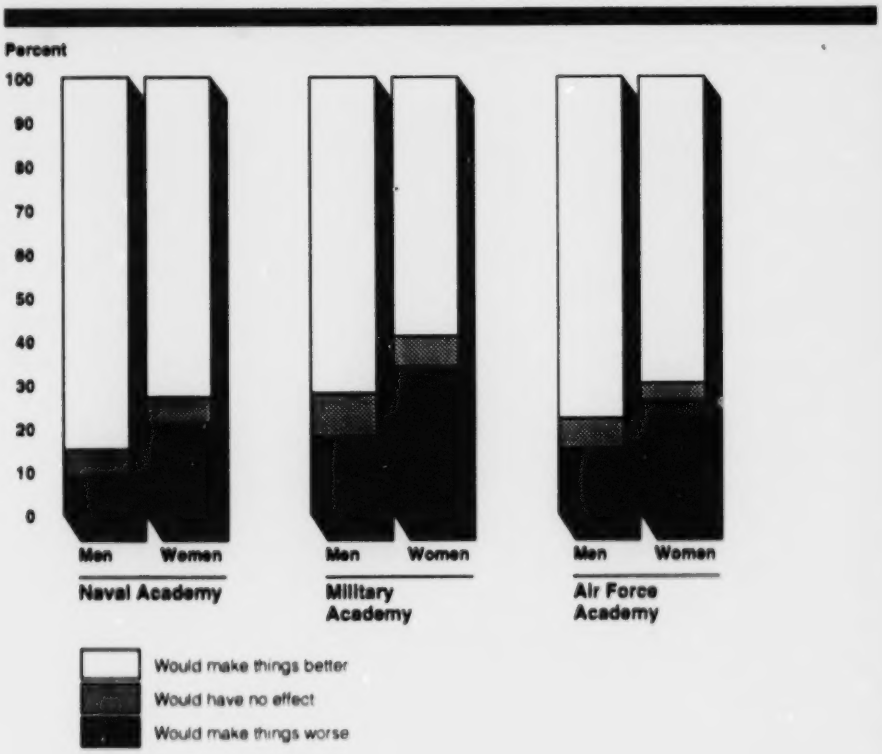
enrollment and attrition rates for minority cadets. Since then, the Way of Life Committee has evolved into a weekly forum that provides a sociocultural support base for those cadets who might otherwise find it difficult to acclimate to a predominately white setting.

Other alternative channels available to cadets are talking to peer counselors called specialists (a trained second-class student in the cadet chain of command who serves as an adviser to fourth-class cadets), contacting the commandant directly through an electronic mail system similar to that in use at the Military Academy, or filing a complaint with the Academy's Inspector General. Academy officials told us that student support is also formally provided by the newly established Center for Character Development and by the Air Officers Commanding. Additionally, any academy staff member who a cadet trusts may listen to the problem and then report it to the appropriate agency.

Perceived Effectiveness of Various Strategies for Dealing With Harassment

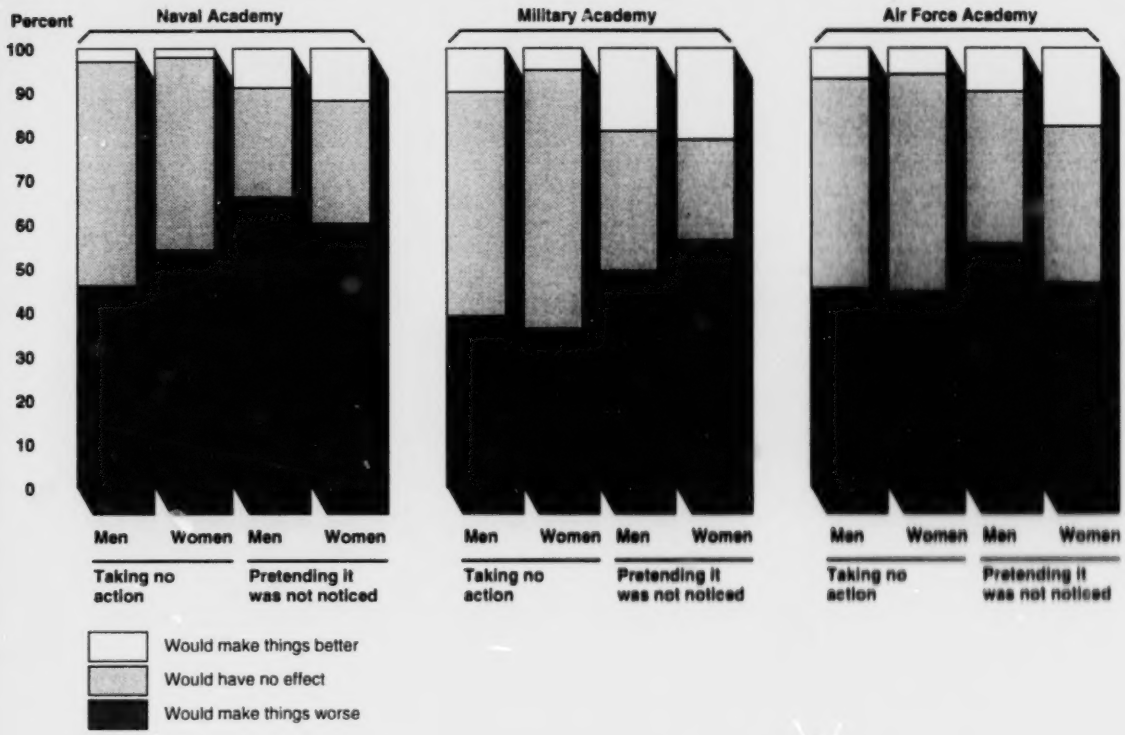
Academy students responding to our survey generally considered the strategy of confronting the harasser as the most effective, while the more passive strategies, such as taking no action or avoiding the person responsible, were seen as the least effective. (See figs. 3.1 and 3.2.) At all three academies, female students were somewhat less likely than male students to indicate that confronting the person responsible was likely to make things better.

Figure 3.1: Perceived Effectiveness of the Strategy of Confronting the Person Responsible



Source: Responses to GAO questionnaire.

Figure 3.2: Perceived Effectiveness of Other Personal Strategies for Dealing With Sexual Harassment

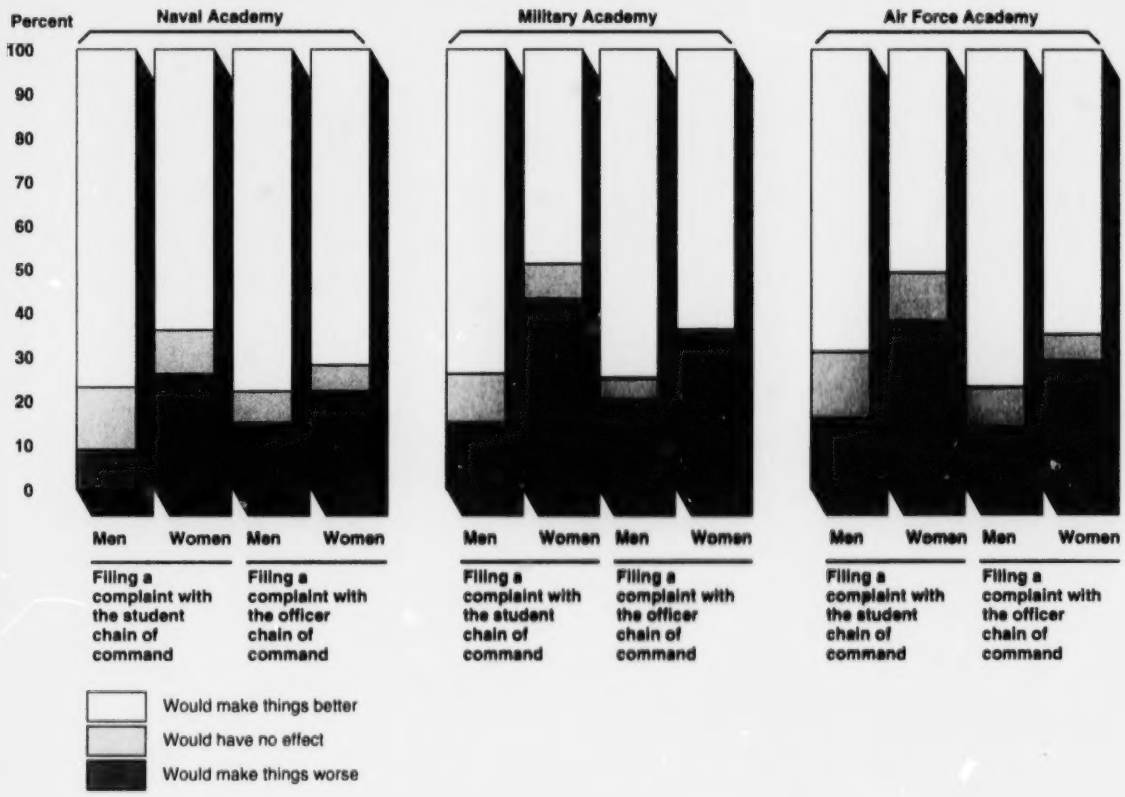


Source: Responses to GAO questionnaire

Students reported that the informal channels were somewhat effective. For instance, about half or more of the respondents believed that telling a chaplain or counselor would make things better.

Students generally perceived that using the student and officer chains of command to formally report grievances was likely to make things better. (See fig. 3.3.) However, men indicated more confidence than women in the chain of command, especially the student chain of command.

Figure 3.3: Perceived Effectiveness of Formal Reporting Channels



Source: Responses to GAO questionnaire.

Students were somewhat less confident in using the alternative official channels. About half or fewer of the respondents saw the alternative channels (such as reporting the harassment to the Commandant, the Inspector General, a "hotline", or the Way of Life Committee) as making things better. The exceptions were the Naval Academy's ombudsmen and the Air Force Academy's cadet specialists. At the Naval Academy, 78 percent of the women perceived that reporting an incident to an ombudsman would make things better. At the Air Force Academy,

70 percent of the women perceived that reporting an incident to a cadet specialist would make things better.

The students indicated that the external channels were the least effective option for surfacing grievances and were more likely to make things worse. At the Naval Academy, 94 percent of the women believed that reporting an incident of harassment to the media would either have no effect or make things worse, compared to 87 percent at the Military Academy and 90 percent at the Air Force Academy. Similarly, 88 percent of the women at the Naval Academy believed that reporting an incident to a Member of Congress would either have no effect or make things worse, compared to 70 percent at the Military Academy and 80 percent at the Air Force Academy.

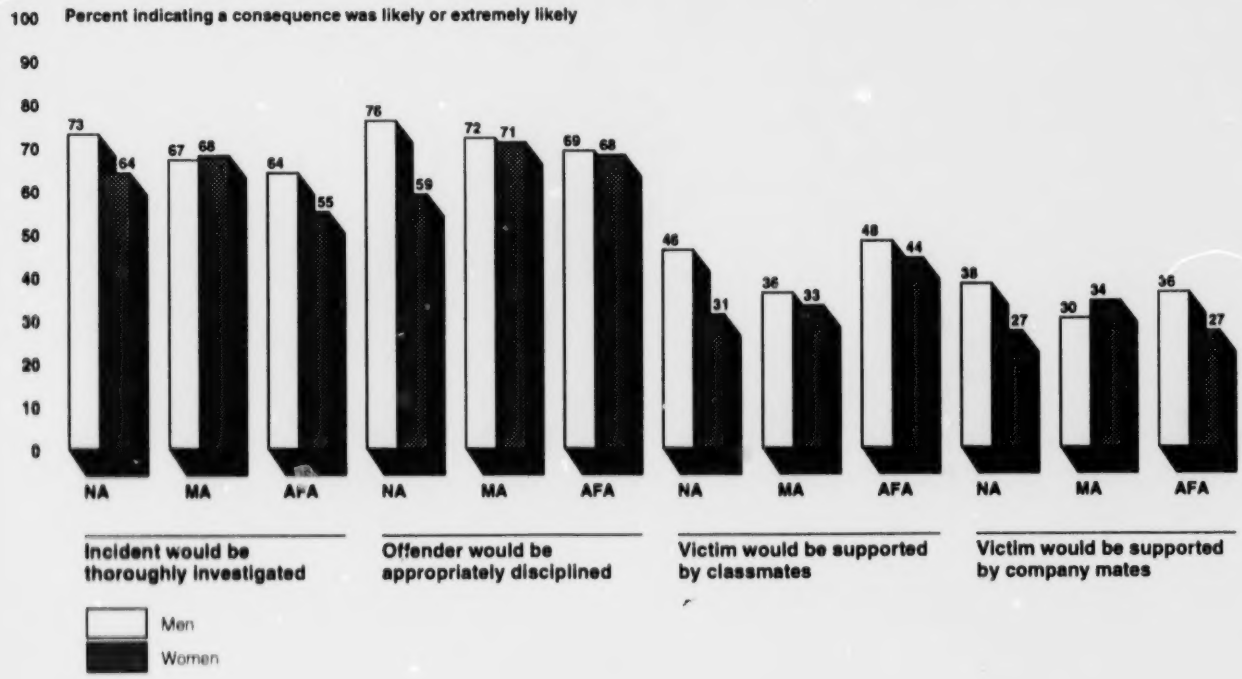
Student Perceptions of Consequences of Reporting Harassment

Students saw both positive and negative consequences to reporting harassment. The majority of students believed that if reported, harassment incidents would be thoroughly investigated and the offender disciplined. But students also saw negative consequences of reporting, such as receiving little support from the chain of command and peers, being viewed as a crybaby or shunned, and receiving lower military performance grades. Students saw as the least likely negative consequence of reporting that the victim would be given extra duties.

Students Perceived That Incidents Would Be Thoroughly Investigated and the Offender Disciplined

At each of the academies, the majority of women indicated that it was likely or extremely likely that an incident of harassment reported to the chain of command would be thoroughly investigated and the offender would be appropriately disciplined (see fig. 3.4).

Figure 3.4: Student Perceptions of Positive Consequences of Reporting Sexual Harassment



Legend

NA = Naval Academy
MA = Military Academy
AFA = Air Force Academy

Source: Responses to GAO questionnaire.

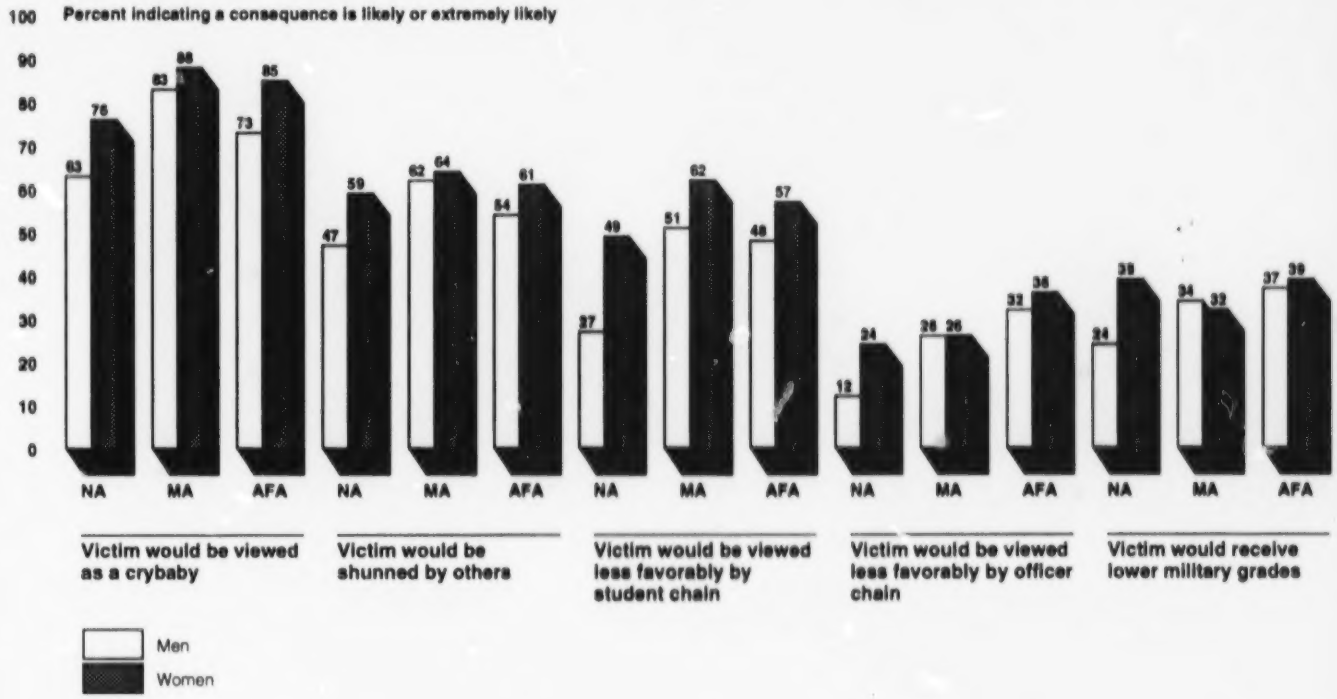
However, as shown in the figure, less than half the students felt that the victim would receive peer support. At the Naval Academy, 31 percent of the women believed that it was likely or extremely likely that the victim would be supported by classmates, compared to 33 percent at the Military Academy and 44 percent at the Air Force Academy. Similarly, at the Naval and Air Force academies, 27 percent of the women believed that it was likely or extremely likely that the victim would be supported by company mates/squadron mates, compared to 34 percent at the Military Academy.

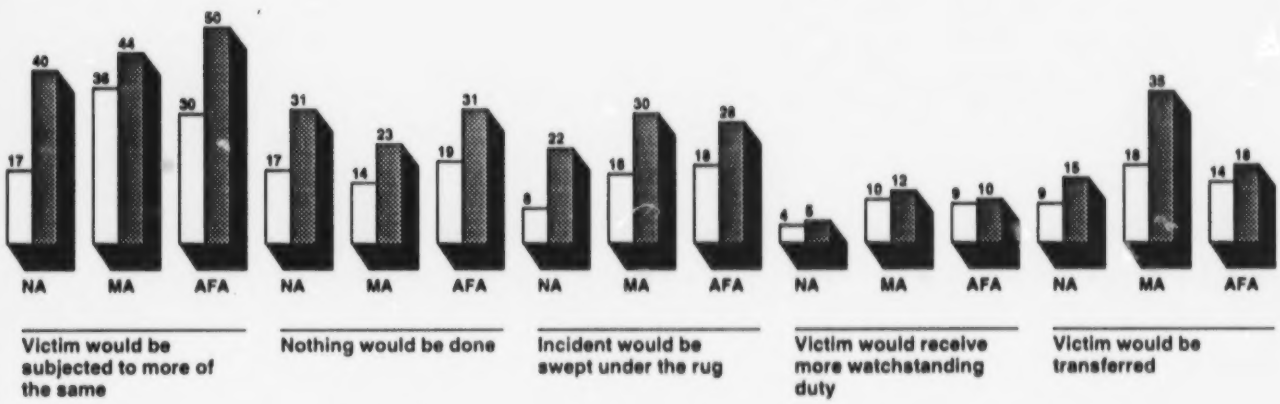
At the Air Force and Military academies, the men and women were generally in agreement as to how likely the positive consequences were. At the Naval Academy, women were less optimistic than men about the likelihood of positive consequences from reporting harassment.

Many Students Associated Negative Consequences With Reporting Harassment

Our questionnaire asked respondents to indicate how likely the following 10 negative consequences were if harassment were reported: the victim would be viewed as a crybaby, the victim would be shunned by others, the victim would be viewed less favorably by the student chain of command, the victim would be viewed less favorably by the officer chain of command, the victim would receive lower military grades, the victim would be subjected to more of the same treatment, nothing would be done, the incident would be swept under the rug, the victim would receive extra duties, and the victim would be transferred. Generally, a higher proportion of women than men saw the negative consequences as likely or extremely likely. (See fig. 3.5.)

Figure 3.5: Student Perceptions of Negative Consequences of Reporting Sexual Harassment





Legend

NA = Naval Academy
MA = Military Academy
AFA = Air Force Academy

Source: Responses to GAO questionnaire

The most likely consequence of reporting harassment was that the victim would be viewed as a crybaby. Overall, students reporting harassment were believed to be more likely to experience negative consequences from their peers than from officers. For example, at each academy, fewer respondents believed that it was likely or extremely likely that the victim would be viewed less favorably by the officer chain of command than by the student chain of command.

Sexual Harassment Can Produce Stress

Our survey results indicate that sexual harassment can have detrimental effects on cadets and midshipmen. A correlation exists between a student's reported exposure to sexual harassment and higher levels of stress, and higher levels of stress were correlated with decreased interest in staying at the academy and making the military a career. However, because many factors may contribute to stress, we could not draw a direct link between harassment and decreased interest in staying at the academy and making the military a career.

Past studies by the Merit Systems Protection Board have suggested that sexual harassment costs the federal government millions of dollars each year. In surveys of federal employees in 1980 and 1988, the Board estimated the annual cost of sexual harassment to the government at $189 million and $267 million, respectively. The estimates were based on costs related to job turnover, emotional stress, reduced productivity, and absenteeism.

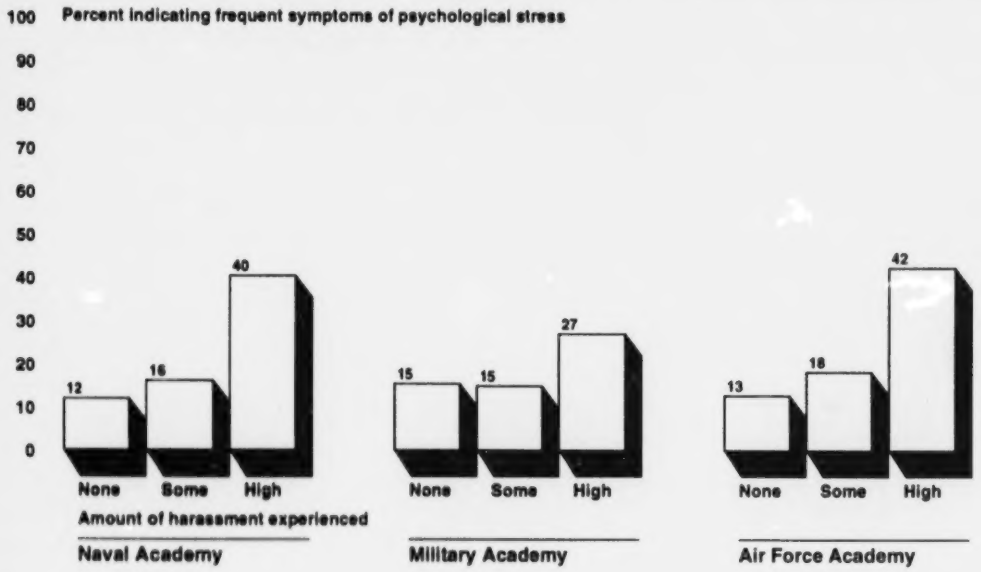
Victims of Sexual Harassment Experienced Higher Levels of Stress

Our questionnaire included items aimed at assessing how often respondents had experienced various psychological and physical symptoms of stress. On the basis of social science research, we delineated 8 psychological stress symptoms—anger, frustration, isolation, powerlessness, self-doubt, nervousness, depression, and feeling that your superiors are against you—and 15 physical stress symptoms—trouble breathing, trouble sleeping, back pains, stomach problems, skin rash, headaches, stiffness or swelling of joints, indigestion, fatigue quickly, trouble staying asleep, difficulty getting up in the morning, heart racing, sweaty hands, dizziness, and poor appetite. These items were summed to provide scales of psychological and physical stress. Similarly, we summed each respondent's answers across all 10 harassment items to construct a measure of the amount of harassment experienced. We transformed these stress and harassment scales into categories of none, some, and high.[1]

Figures 4.1 and 4.2 show the relationship between the amount of harassment experienced by academy students and the two measures of stress.

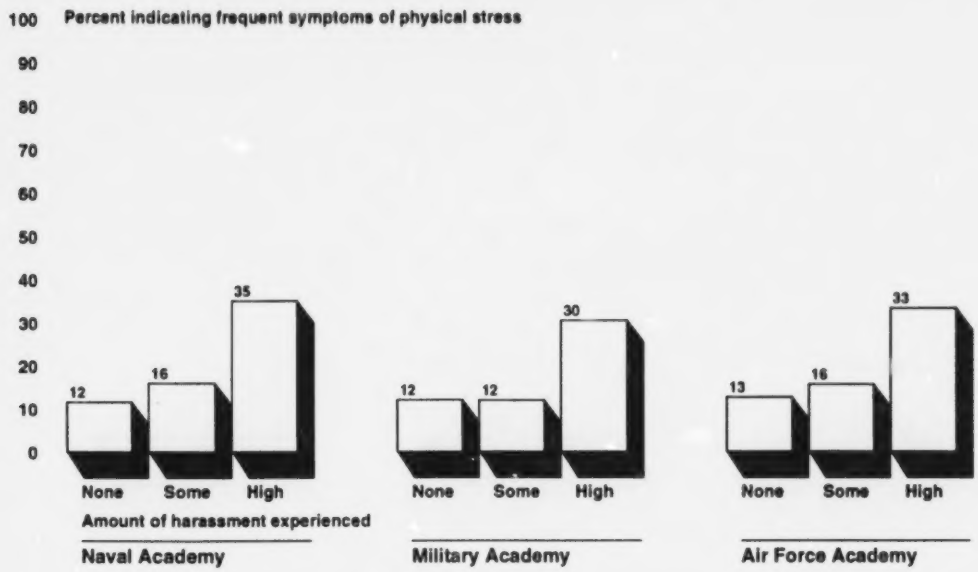
[1]Respondents' scores were categorized as "some" if they fell within one standard deviation above the mean and "high" if more than one standard deviation above the mean. The mean was "none" since men significantly outnumber women at each academy and very few men indicated they experienced sexual harassment.

Figure 4.1: Relationship Between Sexual Harassment and Psychological Stress Among Academy Students



Source: Responses to GAO questionnaire.

Figure 4.2: Relationship Between Sexual Harassment and Physical Stress Among Academy Students



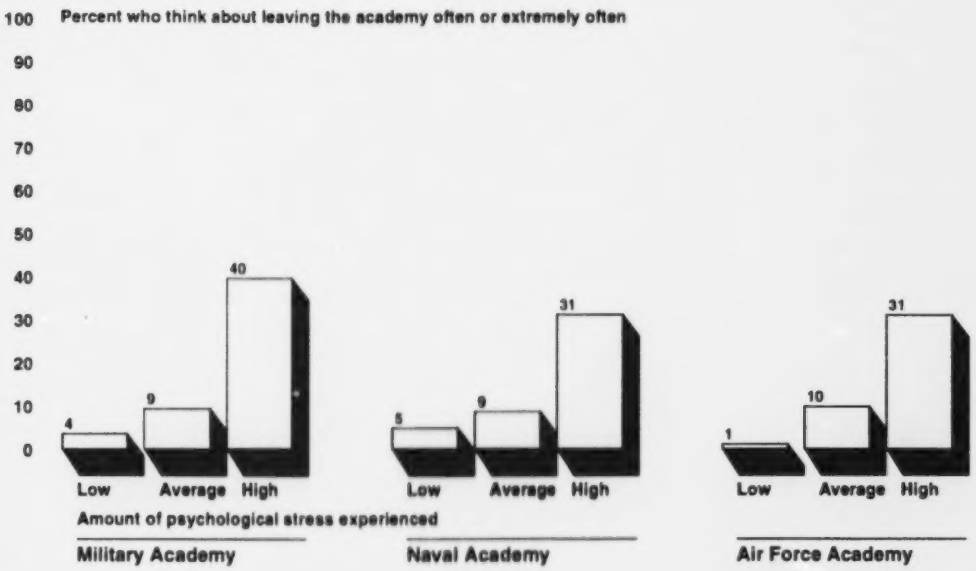
Source: Responses to GAO questionnaire.

For the students at all three academies, greater exposure to harassment was associated with higher levels of psychological and physical stress. For example, figure 4.1 shows that about 40 percent of the students at the Naval Academy whose responses to the set of harassment questions put them in the high harassment category were also in the high psychological stress category, compared with only about 12 percent of students in the none harassment category and 16 percent in the some harassment category. In terms of individual psychological stress symptoms, we found a relationship between those students who reported experiencing a high degree of harassment and those who reported experiencing a high degree of feelings of self-doubt. Regarding the individual physical stress symptoms, there was a relationship between those students who reported experiencing a high degree of harassment and those who reported experiencing a high degree of tiring quickly.

Stress May Increase Attrition

Our survey included a question aimed at assessing how often students think about leaving the academies. Figure 4.3 shows that those students at each of the academies who reported experiencing a higher degree of psychological stress tended to think more frequently about leaving the academy. For example, about 40 percent of the cadets at the Military Academy whose responses to the set of psychological stress symptoms put them in the high stress category were also those who often or extremely often thought of leaving the Academy.[2]

Figure 4.3: Relationship Between Psychological Stress Experienced and Frequency of Thoughts About Leaving the Academy



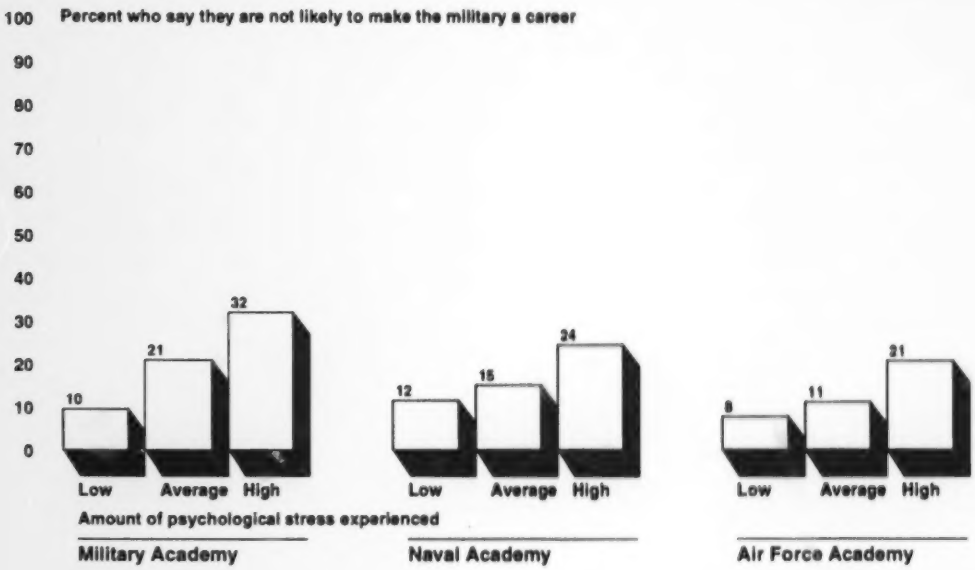
Source: Responses to GAO questionnaire.

Stress May Deter Some From Making the Military a Career

Academy students were asked how likely they were to make the military a career. Figure 4.4 shows that the greater the amount of psychological stress experienced, the less likely the students at all three academies were to express an intent to make the military a career.

[2]Respondents' scores were categorized as "low" if they were more than one standard deviation below the mean, "average" if they fell within one standard deviation above or below the mean, and "high" if they were more than one standard deviation above the mean.

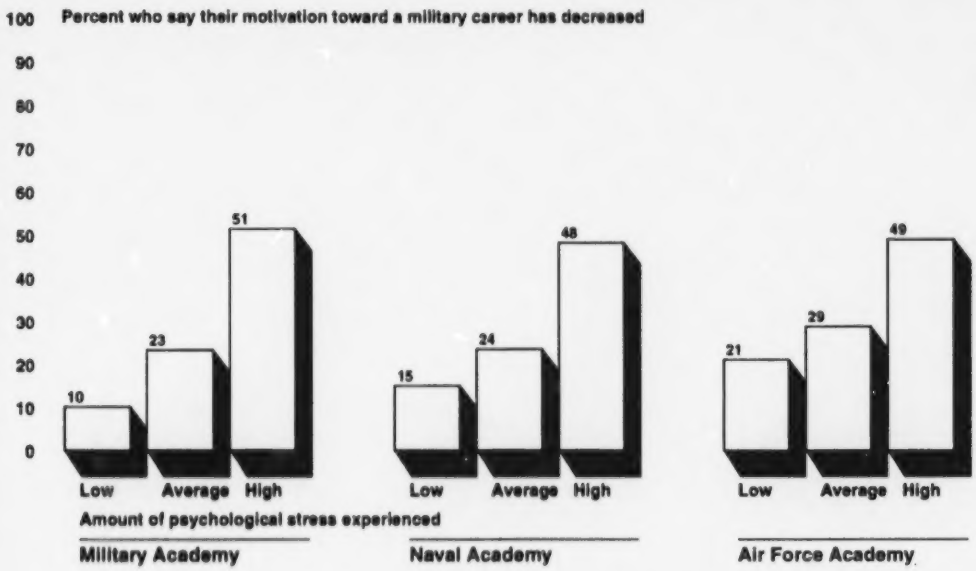
Figure 4.4: Relationship Between Psychological Stress Experienced and Likelihood of Not Making the Military a Career



Source: Responses to GAO questionnaire.

The lower career intent of those who experienced greater stress is not merely a reflection of lower career intent when they entered the academy. When respondents were asked whether their motivation to make the military a career had changed since they entered the academy, those at all three academies who experienced greater psychological stress were more likely to indicate that their motivation to make the military a career had decreased (see fig. 4.5).

Figure 4.5: Relationship Between Psychological Stress Experienced and Decreased Career Motivation



Source: Responses to GAO questionnaire.

Academy Actions to Eradicate Sexual Harassment

The academies generally have complied with the DOD minimum criteria for the military services to use in developing programs to eradicate sexual harassment. In some areas, the academies have gone beyond these minimum criteria. However, the academies have not routinely gathered data on the extent of sexual harassment over time. This has precluded them from evaluating how well their policies and programs have worked. The sexual harassment prevention programs we reviewed at other organizations offer different approaches that may help the academies to improve their own programs.

Academies Have Generally Met DOD's Criteria for Effective Sexual Harassment Prevention Programs

In his July 1991 memorandum, the Secretary of Defense directed each DOD component to implement a sexual harassment eradication program that would incorporate, at a minimum, the following seven elements:

- annual policy statements that explain sexual harassment and reaffirm that sexual harassment will not be tolerated;
- required training programs for all personnel, with special emphasis on how to identify and prevent sexual harassment;
- quality control mechanisms (for example, unit climate assessments) to ensure that sexual harassment training is working;
- prompt, thorough investigations and resolutions of every sexual harassment complaint;
- procedures to hold commanders, supervisors, and managers accountable for providing guidance to personnel on what constitutes sexual harassment and how they can seek redress if they believe they are victims;
- designation of sexual harassment as a special interest item for review in appropriate Inspector General reviews; and
- accountability for compliance reflected in annual performance ratings and fitness reports as well as possible loss of benefits and imposition of penalties.

Annual reports are required in response to this memorandum. The reports are to include a record of accomplishments as well as plans for the future.

Academy Actions to Comply With DOD Criteria

For the most part, the three academies complied with the elements of DOD guidance on sexual harassment prevention. However, Inspector General reviews have not included sexual harassment as a special interest item.

Annual Policy Statements

The policy statements of the academies are generally the same as those issued by their parent services. Each academy either makes reference to

the service's language in its own statements or issues the service policy statement with an academy transmittal memorandum. An examination of these policy statements revealed some common elements but also variations in the amount of information provided. The common elements were references to the definition of sexual harassment, a statement that sexual harassment will not be tolerated, a provision concerning the responsibility of commanders and supervisors in dealing with and eliminating sexual harassment, and some information about ways to deal with sexual harassment.

The policy statements varied in the information provided about formal and informal avenues of dealing with sexual harassment, in references to the possible consequences of sexually harassing someone, and in references to education and training. For example, the Navy's policy statement, which was disseminated throughout the Naval Academy, included a reference to an annual training requirement for all Navy personnel. The policy statement of the Military Academy also contained a reference to training, but the Air Force Academy's policy statement did not.

Training Programs

Each academy provided sexual harassment prevention training to students either as part of leadership courses or in human relations/equal opportunity courses. This training covered such topics as values, prejudices, stereotypes, and discrimination. In addition, the Naval Academy conducted 1 day of training specifically on sexual harassment in September 1992. The Naval and Military academies' training offered expanded explanations of the types of behavior that constitute sexual harassment, while the Air Force Academy's training provided the limited explanation contained in Air Force Regulation 30-2, as well as language referring to quid pro quo and hostile environment situations.

Quality Control Mechanisms

Although the academies had each taken some steps to evaluate their equal opportunity climate, it is not clear that the results of the evaluations were linked to the effectiveness of their training programs. Since August 1990, the Naval Academy has evaluated its training program through annual command assessment reviews that are part of its equal opportunity program. The reviews made general recommendations about the need to continue sexual harassment education, emphasizing that information on the definition, examples of behavior, and procedures to follow should be included. In the fall of 1992, the Naval Academy conducted sexual harassment training that included these elements.

In February 1992, the Military Academy submitted a report on the integration and performance of women at West Point to the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services. The report made reference to the results of several years of annual surveys administered to seniors that included questions on the integration of women, sexual harassment, and other equal opportunity issues. The report also provided information on the extent of human relations training cadets received. However, the report did not link the survey results to the effectiveness of training. In addition, in the fall of 1993, the Military Academy's Inspector General began conducting an equal opportunity climate assessment at the Academy. According to Academy officials, the assessment has been expanded to include students.

At the Air Force Academy, there have been two efforts involving a survey or interviews of cadets and a discussion of human relations training. In May 1992, the Academy submitted a report to the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services that referred to the March 1992 survey on cadet attitudes and behaviors, including sexual harassment (the survey results are discussed in ch. 2). The report noted that the type and magnitude of problems revealed by the survey could be directly managed with creative forms of education and proper role models. However, while the report described the human relations core curriculum, it did not link the survey results to the training program.

In early 1993, at the Academy's request, the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute assessed the equal opportunity and treatment/human relations training programs at the Academy. The Institute assessed the "human relations climate as good, even though personal interviews (with cadets) revealed that sexist and racist attitudes/behaviors and sexual harassment exist in the cadet environment." The Institute raised concerns about the development and presentation of the human relations training lessons. Specifically, it noted:

> "All of the lessons contain biases and often focus attention on women and minorities. This constant focus on minorities and women could create the perception that this training is specifically for majority members to learn about minority and women problems . . . . Additionally, cadets stated during personal interviews that human relations presentations are not serious and are conducted in a joking manner."

In its report to the Academy, the Institute made several specific recommendations regarding education and training, including one to establish a requirement for periodic reviews of lessons to keep them

current, accurate, and applicable. These recommendations were based on interviews with cadets and staff and a review of lesson plans. According to Academy officials, the introductory human relations lesson and the instructional approach used were significantly revised during the summer of 1993. Through an experiential approach, the exercise is aimed at allowing cadets to feel the effects of either enjoying special favor or being totally disregarded, both forms of discrimination. The training includes viewing a video, followed by class discussion, and presents human relations in a leadership context. Institute personnel have conducted training workshops on equal opportunity policies and provided facilitator training at the Academy.

Complaint Investigation and Resolution

Each academy has a process for investigating and resolving formal sexual harassment complaints, usually through the disciplinary system. In addition to its disciplinary system, the Air Force Academy has a Social Actions program to deal with equal opportunity issues. However, the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute's 1993 review at the Air Force Academy found that the Social Actions program was not consistent with Air Force-wide social actions programs. The Academy's Social Actions Office is authorized only to clarify the circumstances surrounding complaints and to make recommendations to commanders as to whether an inquiry or investigation should be conducted. According to the Institute, "A majority of the cadets interviewed perceived Social Actions as a threat and disciplinary tool rather than a proactive agency for helping individuals. They said they were very hesitant to use the program." In response to the Institute's recommendations, Academy officials told us they plan to assign the responsibility for human relations to the newly established Center for Character Development in order to address the student perception. The Center was created to address the internalization of core values by cadets with the goal of making human respect and dignity, moral and ethical development, and honorable conduct standard throughout the Academy.

Accountability of Commanders and Supervisors

The accountability of commanders and supervisors is discussed in the policy statements of all three academies. The policy statements make reference to the role of commanders and supervisors and the procedures for ensuring that sexual harassment is prevented and eliminated. The Naval and Air Force academies' policy statements include language prohibiting commanders and supervisors from condoning sexual harassment. They also refer to the responsibility of commanders and supervisors to take action to ensure that the recipient of sexual harassment is not subsequently the victim of reprisal or retaliation.

Inspector General Reviews

As of September 1993, no inspector general inspections that included sexual harassment prevention and education as a special interest item had been conducted at any of the three academies. The DOD Inspector General has been conducting inspections that included sexual harassment prevention as a special interest item since early 1992. However, since the DOD Inspector General generally conducts inspections of only DOD-wide agencies, it has not conducted an inspection of the academies. The military service inspectors general, which would be the appropriate agencies to inspect the academies, have not conducted inspections of the academies that included sexual harassment as a special interest item.

The Naval Inspector General, by regulation, has designated sexual harassment prevention and education as a special interest item for command inspections. As part of a 3-year cycle of inspecting the three major Navy educational institutions,[1] the Inspector General has scheduled an inspection of the Naval Academy for late 1994.

The Army Inspector General has designated sexual harassment as an item of interest and further described it as one of seven significant areas of Army concern. According to an Inspector General official, the office has not conducted an inspection of the Military Academy within the last 3 years.

As of September 16, 1993, the Air Force Inspector General had designated sexual harassment prevention and education as a special interest item for review during inspections. At this time, the Air Force Inspection Agency has scheduled a management inspection of the Air Force Academy for 1995.

Performance Ratings and Fitness Reports

The military services hold their personnel accountable for compliance with DOD sexual harassment policy in annual performance ratings and fitness reports. The applicable category on the personnel evaluation form is support of equal opportunity for the Navy and the Army and leadership skills for the Air Force. The academies use the service personnel evaluation forms in evaluating personnel assigned to the academies. Also, the academies use a form similar to the service form to evaluate student performance.

[1]The Naval Academy, the Naval Postgraduate School, and the Naval War College are the Navy's major educational institutions.

The Academies Have Taken Additional Steps to Deal With Sexual Harassment, but Program Evaluation Efforts Lack Systematic Approach

The academies have taken a number of actions regarding their sexual harassment prevention and education programs that go beyond the seven minimum elements outlined in the 1991 DOD memorandum. The additional steps cover tracking and monitoring sexual harassment incidents, establishing sexual harassment hotlines, providing counseling support networks, employing lessons learned from actual sexual harassment incidents in training situations, conducting student surveys and discussions on sexual harassment and sexual misconduct, providing training on fraternization, teaching students how to write a letter to a harasser to stop the offensive behavior, offering training on chill in the classroom[2] and date-rape, and making various other institutional changes in dealing with human relations concerns. However, none of the academies has developed usable trend data to assess the effectiveness of its sexual harassment eradication program. The Military and Air Force academies, in particular, have not conducted routine, systematic program evaluations.

Additional Steps Academies Have Taken

The disciplinary system of each academy permits the tracking and reporting of certain categories of misconduct. The Naval Academy's disciplinary system allows the tracking specifically of reported incidents of sexual harassment, whereas the Military and Air Force academies' systems allow tracking by general offense codes, such as conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman/gentlewoman or error in judgment. The cases tracked within each academy's disciplinary system do not include all cases that originate outside the system, such as cases initiated by another investigative entity.

Additionally, as part of the Command Managed Equal Opportunity program, the Naval Academy has begun maintaining a log of all informally resolved, in-company complaints of harassment or denial of equal opportunity. According to Academy officials, the logs will be used to review the frequency and seriousness of complaints being made that would not reach a level requiring formal conduct action.

Two of the academies have established advice/counseling hotlines. In December 1992, the Navy established a toll-free sexual harassment advice/counseling hotline. The Naval Academy publicized the Navy hotline in daily printed schedules of Academy events. In 1988, the Air Force

[2]The Military Academy defines a "chilly" classroom as an atmosphere that alienates any student group from the learning process. The Association of American Colleges describes a chilly classroom climate as a learning climate that subtly or overtly communicates different expectations for women than for men.

Academy established a rape crisis hotline, staffed by a commissioned officer. In February 1993, the hotline was renamed the sexual assault hotline, and it is now staffed by a nurse at the Academy hospital. Unlike the Navy hotline, the Air Force Academy hotline was established to deal specifically with rape and sexual assault, but not to provide advice or counseling regarding sexual harassment. The Military Academy does not have a hotline for cadets.

A third step the academies have taken is setting up counseling support networks. Each academy provides counseling support through student counseling centers and chaplains. The centers are staffed by trained psychologists. Generally, students seeking such counseling are free to schedule an appointment during a free period in their schedules. Counselors are able to provide the student with limited confidentiality. Chaplains also provide counseling support and are able to provide full confidentiality.

Another action involves the practice of employing lessons learned from actual human relations incidents in training situations. In conducting core values training in January 1993,[3] the Naval Academy modified the Navy version of the training and included some case examples based on Academy incidents. The Air Force Academy recently initiated a similar approach in human relations education. Drawing from an earlier practice of using "Cadet X" letters for honor education,[4] the Academy developed Cadet X letters for human relations problems. According to the 1993 report by the Ad Hoc Committee on Respect and Dignity, "this can be an extremely useful mechanism for educating cadets about problem behavior as well as increasing awareness of the actual disposition of incidents."

According to Naval Academy officials, in August 1993, the Commandant of Midshipmen met with more than 500 female students to conduct an on-the-spot survey on sexual harassment and sexual misconduct. He tabulated the survey results and discussed the results with the women. The Commandant later met with male students to discuss the women's survey results, solicit questions, and encourage further discussion. Another action taken by the Naval Academy was to conduct training for all students on fraternization in the fall of 1993.

[3]This training course is designed to teach the Navy's core values of honor, commitment, and courage to all Navy and Marine Corps personnel.

[4]These letters are summaries of actual honor violations that are used for training.

The Military Academy is providing training to second class (junior) cadets on writing a structured letter to the harasser. Such letters are designed to describe the incident, how the victim felt about what happened, and what the victim wants to happen to resolve the matter. The Military Academy also offers two additional programs, Chill in the Classroom and a Date-Rape Psychodrama, which Academy officials characterized as trendsetters in the field of gender integration. Academy officials said they are continually being sought out by other institutions of higher learning for advice and counsel regarding gender integration issues.

Air Force Academy officials said they have instituted changes in how the Academy addresses human relations concerns. These changes include focus groups with nonattribution that allow for the free cross flow of information between students and staff; informal chats between Academy senior leadership and students; increased student involvement in human relations education and the adjudication of human relations concerns; teams to deal with issues identified in past surveys and focus groups; and increased efforts to provide timely and meaningful feedback to students on human relations issues.

Academies Have Not Evaluated Their Sexual Harassment Eradication Programs in a Systematic Manner

As discussed previously, the academies have, to varying degrees, evaluated their sexual harassment eradication programs. However, their evaluations have not been systematic and have not ensured that data are comparable from year to year. Without trend data, the academies have no way of knowing whether the level of sexual harassment is decreasing.

Although a formal program evaluation is not part of the DOD criteria for sexual harassment eradication programs, evaluations provide feedback from the environment and are a basic tool for gauging progress.[5] Evaluations may be undertaken for a variety of reasons: to judge the worth of ongoing programs and to estimate the usefulness of attempts to improve them, to assess the utility of innovative programs and initiatives, to increase the effectiveness of program management and administration, and to meet various accountability requirements.

Since 1990, the Naval Academy has conducted three annual command assessments to evaluate its equal opportunity climate (which includes identifying and resolving equal opportunity/sexual harassment problems

[5]Department of Education regulations (34 C.F.R. sec. 106.3), although not applicable to the service academies, require that "Each recipient education institution shall, within one year of the effective date of this part . . . evaluate . . . its current policies and practices and the effects thereof concerning . . . the treatment of students . . ."

and concerns). According to Academy instructions, the assessment is to focus on the treatment and achievements of individuals, the overall effectiveness of the equal opportunity program, and follow-up actions on previously identified equal opportunity issues. The assessments have involved the collection of academic, military, physical education, and conduct data, including data from surveys and interviews of students. The assessments have concluded with reports to the Commandant, consisting of a summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for changes in the program. However, the Academy has had difficulty compiling the data needed for these assessments, and the data developed for each assessment cannot be readily compared to analyze trends. Comparing the data is difficult in part because different teams have conducted each assessment, and the team that conducted the most recent assessment had difficulty determining the source and understanding the significance of data collected from the previous two assessments.

Although the Military and Air Force academies have evaluated elements of their equal opportunity programs, their efforts have been less focused and systematic than the approach taken by the Naval Academy. The efforts of the Military Academy to evaluate the effectiveness of its equal opportunity program have largely consisted of including several questions relating to the program in a survey administered annually to seniors. Beginning in 1989, the survey included questions on sexual harassment, integration of women and minorities, and other human relations topics. Since then, however, some of the sexual harassment questions in the survey have been reworded or dropped, hindering the comparison of responses across the years. Also, by surveying only seniors, the Academy missed the experience of three-quarters of the student body each year. The Academy official at the office responsible for administering these surveys knew of no documented actions taken as a result of the survey responses.

Since the spring of 1992, the Air Force Academy has taken several steps toward evaluating its equal opportunity program. In March 1992, the Academy administered a climate survey on attitudes and behaviors toward sexual harassment and racial discrimination to 3,900 of its students. In February and March 1993, the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute evaluated the human relations program at the Academy and made recommendations to improve it. In February 1993, prompted by a female cadet's allegations that she had been sexually assaulted, the Superintendent established the Ad Hoc Committee on Respect and Dignity. Focus groups were held to discuss the human relations climate at the Academy, and data were collected through student and staff

questionnaires. On May 20, 1993, the committee issued a report exploring human relations issues at the Academy and recommending major initiatives to correct the deficiencies it discovered. These recent steps show that the Academy is taking a hard look at its human relations climate. However, these actions appear sporadic, rather than part of a systematic evaluation of all elements of the Academy's equal opportunity program.

As of November 1993, Air Force Academy officials informed us that they were considering a proposal to establish an office for institutional assessment reporting directly to the Superintendent. If established, such an office would combine institutional quality initiatives and assessment efforts into a single office.

Other Options for Sexual Harassment Prevention Programs

The increased attention to the issue of sexual harassment over the past few years has generated additional ideas from a variety of sources on how to improve programs aimed at preventing or dealing with harassment. During our review, we identified approaches that might prove effective at the academies. Specifically, these approaches are (1) expanding the explanation of the range of behaviors that could be considered appropriate, questionable, inappropriate, or sexual harassment; (2) publicizing sexual harassment policy and procedures through student and staff handbooks and pamphlets; (3) suggesting various personal strategies for informal resolution, such as approaching the offender with a friend, roommate, or adviser; and (4) experimenting with new approaches and topics for sexual harassment training.

Marine Corps actions provide an example of how new training approaches can be incorporated. In 1992, the Corps' sexual harassment elimination training was revised to include an expanded explanation of potentially harassing or unacceptable behaviors. The course contained a discussion of using a traffic light to classify behaviors. The green was unoffensive behavior, the red was offensive behavior in any circumstance, and the yellow was behavior that most people would find unacceptable and should be avoided. Specific examples of behaviors in each color zone were presented. This approach was included in a January 1993 Secretary of the Navy instruction on Navy policy on sexual harassment.

The American Council on Education's sexual harassment guidelines noted that brochures describing what kinds of behavior constitute sexual harassment and what the person who is harassed should do about it have

been used very successfully on a number of college campuses. Although the academies have no plans to publish such brochures, two services plan to do so. The Navy plans to issue pamphlets explaining the complaint resolution system and the investigation and complaint procedures. The Army has plans to publish a pamphlet on sexual harassment.

Researchers on sexual harassment have offered various personal strategies for dealing with sexual harassment.[6] Among these options were the writing of a structured letter, described earlier as outlined in the Military Academy sexual harassment training course. Keeping a diary was another option similar to writing the structured letter in that both options provided documentation of the incident(s) and the victim's feelings about it. They had the double benefit of allowing the victim to put the feelings down on paper (an act that may provide some relief) and providing legal evidence if needed. Another option was a person a victim could consult with in confidence without having to take any further action, if so desired. Such a person could act as a third party in helping the victim and the harasser resolve the issue or in accompanying the victim when talking with the harasser. This option is particularly useful because it helps people of unequal rank to save face.

A 1992 assessment of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy recommended that the Academy modify its approach to training about sexual harassment to move away from large lectures about the topic. Instead, the report suggested the Academy train human relations representatives to work in small groups and use videotapes to explore case situations. The report recommended that, as part of the small group training sessions, the Academy employ both men and women in role-playing situations designed to illustrate the types of situations that are off-limits, ambiguous, permissible under certain situations, and permissible at all times. In terms of the training content, the report recommended that the Academy present the training in the context of understanding how sexual harassment or

[6]Mary P. Rowe, "Dealing with Sexual Harassment," Harvard Business Review, Vol. 59, No. 3: pp. 1-9, May-June 1981; Mary P. Rowe, "Helping People Help Themselves: An ADR Option for Interpersonal Conflict," Negotiation Journal, pp. 239-48, July 1990; Mary P. Rowe, "The Ombudsman's Role in a Dispute Resolution System," Negotiation Journal, pp. 353-61, October 1991; Susan L. Webb, Step Forward: Sexual Harassment in the Workplace: What You Need To Know! (Mastermedia: New York, New York, 1991); Michele A. Paludi, editor, Ivory Power: Sexual Harassment on Campus (State University of New York Press: Albany, New York, 1990); The National Council for Research on Women, Sexual Harassment: Research and Resources (National Council for Research on Women: New York, New York, 1991); American Council on Education, Sexual Harassment on Campus: A Policy and Program of Deterrence (American Council on Education Publications Department SH: Washington, District of Columbia, 1992); and the Princeton Economic Research, Inc.'s Recommendations Related to the Culture and Climate Assessment of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, July 1992.

discrimination affects working conditions, environments, and the quality of the leadership that future leaders will provide.

According to Academy officials, as of the spring of 1991, the Air Force Academy has modified its human relations training in the direction of smaller class sizes to increase classroom participation. In the spring of 1993, cadet human relations training included films, developed by the Academy, depicting scenarios for use in discussions between students or between students and facilitators. Academy officials also have told us that they are bringing in speakers as part of the leadership series to address human relations and character development issues.

Conclusions

The data being collected by the academies is not adequate to judge the progress they are making in eradicating sexual harassment. For example, the Military Academy is not gathering data from the total population (only senior cadets) and is not asking similar questions from year to year so that comparisons can be made. The Air Force Academy's recent steps focused separately on certain elements of its program, but did not address all aspects of its program systematically. The Naval Academy has conducted three climate assessments, but the data collected in these efforts cannot be readily compared across time.

Without trend data, the academies cannot effectively evaluate their sexual harassment programs, including those efforts to deter the harassment from occurring in the first place. The principal objective of such evaluations should be to assess the extent to which specific academy efforts are contributing to the overall goal of eliminating sexual harassment. However, without knowing whether sexual harassment has been declining, the academies will not be able to assess the effectiveness of their programs or to decide whether to continue existing programs, restructure them, or institute new ones. We believe that with little additional investment, the academies should be able to collect and analyze relevant data.

Recommendations

To better achieve DOD's goal of a sexual harassment-free environment, we recommend that the academy superintendents take the following actions:

- Gather and analyze data, through routine reviews of case files, student surveys, and focus groups, on the extent of reported and unreported incidents of sexual harassment.

- Evaluate, on a systematic basis, the effectiveness of sexual harassment eradication programs on the basis of such data.
- If the eradication programs do not prove to be effective, institute and evaluate new approaches to work toward eradicating sexual harassment. These approaches may include expanding the explanation of behaviors that could constitute sexual harassment, issuing sexual harassment pamphlets or brochures, offering lower risk confrontation options, and varying the methods and content of training.

Agency Comments

In commenting on our report, DOD officials generally agreed with our findings, conclusions, and recommendations. They stated that DOD is aware of continuing problems and is comprehensively addressing these problems at each of the academies. They also stated that the service academies are leading institutions in establishing gender and racial tolerant climates. On the basis of discussions with agency officials, we have incorporated their comments where appropriate.

Comments From the Department of Defense

PERSONNEL AND READINESS

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON DC 20301-4000

DEC 11 1993

Mr. Frank C. Conahan
Assistant Comptroller General
National Security and
International Affairs Division
U. S. General Accounting Office
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Conahan:

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the General Accounting Office (GAO) draft report entitled, "DOD SERVICE ACADEMIES: More Actions Needed to Eliminate Sexual Harassment," dated October 7, 1993 (GAO Code 391205/OSD Case 9537). The Department concurs with the report.

The DoD appreciates the GAO acknowledgment of the progress made and actions taken at the academies to eliminate sexual harassment. The Service academies are leading institutions in establishing gender and racial tolerant climates. The DoD is, however, aware of continuing problems, and is comprehensively addressing these problems at each of the academies.

The detailed DoD comments on the draft report are provided in the enclosure. The Department appreciates the opportunity to respond to the draft report.

Sincerely,

Edwin Dorn

Enclosure:
As Stated

Printed on Recycled Paper

Description of Questionnaire Methodology

The purpose of this appendix is to describe the methodology we used in developing our questionnaire, our sampling approach, the response rates, the weighting of the data, the processing of completed questionnaires, the sampling error, and other methodological issues.

Questionnaire Development

Questionnaire items were developed to address the full scope of our review, which included other issues besides sexual harassment. Our initial questionnaire was developed, on the basis of interviews and a review of previous internal and external studies of the academies, for administration to Naval Academy midshipmen. In addition, two separate questionnaires were developed for administration to academy faculty members and to the commandant's staff, chaplains, and counselors.

We pretested the Naval Academy questionnaire with a diverse group of midshipmen, representing different classes, genders, and race. The questionnaires then went through extensive reviews, including reviews by (1) internal Naval Academy research personnel, (2) the research staff of the Navy's study group on the treatment of women, (3) the Defense Advisory Commission on Women in the Services, and (4) our consultants familiar with the academies.

The Naval Academy questionnaires were subsequently modified to apply to the Military Academy and the Air Force Academy. Questionnaire items were reviewed by the institutional research and commandant's staffs at each academy to modify the terminology to apply to their academy, eliminate questions or response items that did not apply, and add questions or response items to address issues unique to their academy. The modified questionnaires were pretested at the Military and Air Force academies among groups of six to eight cadets, including women and minorities, and members from all four classes. We used the same pretest procedures as we had at the Naval Academy.

Sampling Methodology

To ensure an adequate number of women and minorities would be included, we used a stratified random sample design that would allow us to oversample those two groups. Randomization was accomplished by using the last digit of the social security number for selection.[1] We selected one final digit for all cadets and midshipmen and an additional final digit for women and minority males, aimed at producing a sample of

[1]The last four digits of social security numbers are essentially a random field based on the order in which individual social security offices process the applications they receive. Selecting one final digit could be expected to yield a sample of about 10 percent.

about 10 percent of white males, 20 percent of females, and 20 percent of minority males.

For faculty members, we used a simple random sample design, using the last digit of the social security number to select a target sample of about 20 percent at each academy.

Because of their limited numbers, we targeted the entire population of the commandant's staff officers overseeing the student units, chaplains, and counselors at each academy rather than sampling.

Questionnaire Response Rates and Weighting of Data

The questionnaires were administered to Naval Academy midshipmen in December 1990 and to cadets at the Military and Air Force academies in March 1991. Those selected for the sample were notified through academy channels to report to rooms designated for the questionnaire administration. The questionnaires were administered by our staff during what would otherwise be free time for the respondents. Respondents were assured of anonymity and attendance was not taken at the survey administration.

Completed questionnaires were received from 527 Naval Academy midshipmen (a response rate of about 84 percent), 469 Military Academy cadets (a response rate of about 86 percent), and 493 Air Force Academy cadets (a response rate of about 91 percent).

Since we oversampled females and minorities, we needed to apply weights to the responses to obtain population estimates. Raw weights were computed by dividing the number of subgroup responses into the subgroup population. However, applying raw weights would artificially increase the number of cases and inflate tests of statistical significance. To avoid inflated tests of significance, we used the raw weights to compute constrained weights, which when applied to the data make the number of weighted cases equal the number of unweighted cases.[2] Weights applied in this manner yield data that represent the total population without distorting significance tests.

For the faculty, the questionnaires were administered in person by our staff at the Naval and Military academies and through the mail at the Air Force Academy. Questionnaires were completed by 122 faculty members (19 percent of the population) at the Naval Academy, 132 (26 percent of

[2]SPSS-X User's Guide, 3rd edition, Chicago, IL: SPSS, Inc., 1988.

the population) at the Military Academy, and 154 (27 percent of the population) at the Air Force Academy.

For the Commandant's staff, the questionnaires were administered in person by our staff at the Naval and Military academies and through the mail at the Air Force Academy. Questionnaires were completed by 49 staff members (94 percent of the population) at the Naval Academy, 61 (95 percent of the population) at the Military Academy, and 65 (86 percent of the population) at the Air Force Academy.

Processing of Completed Questionnaires

We reviewed and verified each returned questionnaire. Responses were double-keyed, creating two files for each completed questionnaire. The two files were then compared for consistency and corrections made as necessary. We then checked the overall accuracy of the keyed data by verifying every tenth record back to the responses in the completed questionnaire. None of the nine sets of questionnaires reached an error level of 1 percent.

Sampling Error

Since we surveyed samples of cadets, midshipmen, and faculty rather than the entire populations, the results we obtained are subject to some degree of uncertainty, or sampling error. Sampling errors represent the expected difference between our sample results and the results we would have obtained had we surveyed the entire populations.

On the basis of our response rates, we estimate that our results can be generalized to the cadet and midshipman populations at the 95-percent confidence level with a maximum sampling error of plus or minus 4.3 percent at the Air Force Academy, 4.4 percent at the Military Academy, and 4.1 percent at the Naval Academy.

For the academy faculties, we estimate that the results can be generalized to the faculty populations at the 95-percent confidence level with a maximum sampling error of plus or minus 7 percent at the Air Force Academy, 7.8 percent at the Military Academy, and 8.4 percent at the Naval Academy.

The sampling errors for various subgroups for which data are cited in this report appear in table II.1. The decimal figures in the table show the sampling errors that correspond to various percentages of respondents selecting a particular response alternative. For example, if we state that

10 percent of Naval Academy midshipmen responded in a given way, the table shows a sampling error of 2.7 percent corresponding to "all midshipmen" and a 10 to 90 percent response split. This means that we can be 95-percent confident that the percentage of midshipmen responding that way in the population would be within 10 percent plus or minus 2.7 percent, or between 7.3 and 12.7 percent.

Table II.1: Sampling Errors for Various Academy Subgroups

			Percentage split in responses									
Subgroup	**Population**	**Sample**	**05/95**	**10/90**	**15/85**	**20/80**	**25/75**	**30/70**	**35/65**	**40/60**	**45/55**	**50/50**
Naval Academy												
All midshipmen	4,391	527	2.2	2.7	3.0	3.3	3.6	3.8	3.9	4.0	4.1	4.1
Men	3,980	434	2.4	3.0	3.3	3.7	4.0	4.2	4.4	4.5	4.5	4.6
Women	411	93	5.9	6.9	7.8	8.5	8.8	8.8	9.1	9.3	9.5	9.5
Faculty	630	122	5.2	6.0	6.8	7.3	7.8	7.8	8.1	8.3	8.4	8.4
Military Academy												
All cadets	4,296	469	2.3	2.9	3.2	3.5	3.8	4.0	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.4
Men	3,842	393	2.5	3.2	3.7	3.9	4.2	4.4	4.6	4.7	4.8	4.8
Women	454	76	7.0	8.4	9.1	9.8	10.3	10.6	10.5	10.8	10.9	11.0
Faculty	512	132	4.6	5.5	6.3	6.7	7.1	7.2	7.4	7.6	7.7	7.8
Air Force Academy												
All cadets	4,354	493	2.2	2.8	3.1	3.4	3.7	3.9	4.1	4.2	4.2	4.3
Men	3,804	379	2.6	3.3	3.8	4.0	4.3	4.5	4.7	4.8	4.9	4.9
Women	550	114	5.2	6.2	7.0	7.6	8.0	8.3	8.3	8.5	8.6	8.6
Faculty	565	154	4.0	5.0	5.6	6.0	6.4	6.4	6.7	6.9	7.0	7.0

Methodological Issues

Scale Development

Our questionnaire included a set of 10 items aimed at determining the extent to which cadets and midshipmen personally experienced various types of harassment. These items were developed based on a review of previous studies of harassment in other environments such as civil service and the military, as well as discussions with academy students and officials. A scale measuring the extent of harassment experience was created by summing cadet and midshipmen responses across all 10 forms of treatment. This scale was highly skewed since most males reported no exposure to any of the 10 forms. The reliability of the scale was tested

using Cronbach's coefficient alpha, which ranged from 0.86 to 0.89 for the three academies.

Our questionnaire also included items aimed at assessing how often respondents experienced various physical and psychological symptoms of stress. These items were adapted from sets of somatic complaint and similar items used in various studies as indicators of stress and mental health.[3] We constructed scales of physical and psychological stress by summing, respectively, the responses to 15 physical symptom items and 8 psychological symptom items. These summed stress scales had high internal consistency (coefficient alpha ranging from 0.83 to 0.85 for the physical stress symptom scale and was 0.88 for the psychological stress symptom scale at the three academies). Both scales approximated a normal distribution.

We transformed these stress scale scores into categories of low, average, and high. The transformation assigned respondents scoring between one standard deviation above and below the mean to the category of "average." In a normal distribution, this typically accounts for slightly over two-thirds of the cases. Scores more than one standard deviation below the mean were assigned to the "low" category, and those more than one standard deviation above the mean were assigned to the "high" category.

[3]G. Gurin, J. Veroff, and S. Feld, Americans View Their Mental Health (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1960); T.S. Langner,"A Twenty-two Item Screening Score of Psychiatric Symptoms Indicating Impairment," Journal of Health and Human Behavior, Vol.3 (1962) pp. 269-276; S.M. Hunt Jr., K. Singer, and S. Cobb, "Components of depression identified from a self-rating depression inventory for survey use," Archives of General Psychiatry, Vol. 16 (1967) pp. 441-447; R.D. Caplan, S. Cobb, J.R.P. French Jr., R.V. Harrison, and S.R. Pinneau Jr., Job Demands and Worker Health: Main Effects and Occupational Differences (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1975).

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